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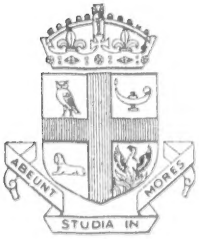

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TECUMSEH

CHIEF OF THE SHAWANOES

A TALE OF THE WAR OF 1812

BY

COLONEL H. R. GORDON

Author of "Pontiac, Chief of the Ottawas," etc.

TECUMSEH AND THE BOYS. PAGE 45

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TECUMSEH,

CHIEF OF THE SHAWANOES.

CHAPTER I.

TWO YOUNG PIONEERS.

ONE balmy autumn morning, during the early days of Ohio and Kentucky, George Hardin, a sturdy youth, whose home lay a dozen miles to the north, came down to the Ohio River and looked keenly across to the opposite shore, as if he expected the appearance of some one.

Young Hardin was dressed in the usual fashion of the frontier at that time, his costume consisting of leggings, leathern breeches, hunting shirt, and coon-skin cap. Instead of the moccasins often worn, he used coarse, strong shoes, and carried in his hand a long, heavy flint-lock rifle, for, as you know, percussion caps and breech-loaders were not dreamed of in those days. Indeed, as late as the Mexican war, many of our soldiers were armed with flint-lock muskets. A powder-horn was slung by a string

over one shoulder, and the supply of bullets was carried in a leathern pouch.

George Hardin was a fine specimen of the rugged, alert youth of the days of our grandparents. His father was a famous pioneer, and had trained the youth in woodcraft from the time he was able to rest his ponderous gun on a log or in the crotch of a tree and aim at a wild turkey, buffalo, deer, or bear. At the age of sixteen, when we introduce him to the reader, he was allowed to wander at will through the trackless forests, sometimes being absent for three or four days without causing alarm to his parents.

Yet it may be said that danger always hung over the head of the hunter or settler, for the Indians were sleepless in their watchfulness. The blazing cabin, the sharp explosion of the rifle, the war-whoop of the red man, and the whizz of the deadly tomahawk were the most common sounds that broke the solemn stillness of the vast wilderness.

On this beautiful morning young Hardin parted the bushes in front and on the margin of the broad, placid stream with as much care as if he expected to see a band of Shawanoes, Wyandots, or Delawares; but such was always his habit, for the first lesson taught to him by his father was that never, when in the woods, must he lay aside his caution, even for a single minute.

It seemed a long time that the lad spent in scrutinizing the farther bank, but his manner showed that he failed to discern that for which he was looking. His clear hazel eyes roamed along the overhanging bushes and as far up and down stream as his vision could reach, but no sign of living creature met his gaze. It was as if he were the only person within the depth of the vast solitude.

"Ben 's late," he said to himself; "for I know I 'm not ahead of time, and I expected to find him here."

Puckering his lips, he emitted a sound like the call of a wild turkey. It was faint, but so clear that it easily penetrated the forest arches on the other shore, and would have deceived any bird that chanced to hear it. Having uttered the signal, he stood in his pose of intense attention, listening for the reply. For a half-minute the stillness was unbroken, and then a sound so similar to his own that it might have been mistaken for its echo seemed to flutter from among the trees on the other side of the Beautiful River and steal across to where he stood. The tanned but handsome countenance glowed with pleasure, and, hesitating no longer, young Hardin stepped forward so as to be free of and beyond the overhanging vegetation, with his one foot on the edge of the water.

And the person on the Kentucky shore did pre-

cisely the same. He was a lad of about the same age as Hardin, and standing thus in full view of each other, they waved each a hand in greeting. Then Hardin took off his heavy cap and circled it once about his head. The other imitated him, and thus a full understanding was established between them.

But the similarity of action now ceased. Hardin held his expectant pose, and evidently was awaiting some movement on the part of his friend, who did not keep him waiting. Stepping back so as to permit the vegetation to close like a curtain before him, he was absent from sight for only a few moments, when a small canoe shot out from the undergrowth, and guided by the single occupant, with his long paddle, skimmed swiftly to the point where Hardin awaited his coming.

As straight as an arrow the birchen craft sped across the river, touching the grassy bank at the feet of Hardin, who carefully seated himself in the little boat, which was turned so as to face the other way, though there was scarcely a perceptible difference between the bow and stern.

The newcomer was Ben Mayberry, a youth of about the same age as Hardin, and his costume and weapons were similar. His home was to the south, and this morning had been fixed upon fully three weeks before for a meeting between them at the

point where they now saw each other. The plan was carried out so well that the youths, coming from cabins separated by many miles, reached opposite banks of the Ohio within the same ten minutes.

"George," said the Kentuckian, suddenly ceasing his paddling, "I 'm afraid we 're going to have trouble."

"How?" asked the other, showing no surprise or alarm.

"The Shawanoes are on the war-path."

"When are they not on the war-path?" was the reply or rather question of Hardin.

"Not often—that 's a fact; but they 're between us and my home."

Hardin became more interested.

"Then we must contrive to slip past them, or, why not turn about and go home with me?"

The young Kentuckian shook his head.

"Our agreement was that we should meet here, just as we have done, and you were to go home with me for a visit. If you 're afraid, I 'll put you ashore, and let you hurry back to your folks."

This remark might have caused offence, but for the smile that accompanied it. While the lads often jested with each other, neither could be induced to utter a word that might rankle the feelings of his friend. Young Hardin looked calmly into the face of Mayberry and replied:

"When I want you to put me on the Ohio shore, I 'll let you know."

"All right; I 'm at your service, but it is well that you should understand how things are."

"Did you see anything of the Shawanoes on your way here?"

"I passed close to one of their camp-fires—so close that I heard the shouts which they make when getting ready to go on the war-path."

"Why did n't you steal up near enough to get a sight at them?"

"I did."

"What did you see?"

"I saw them throwing their tomahawks at marks on the trees, whooping, dancing their war-dances, and warming themselves up for the work they love so well."

"Does your father know anything about this?"

"It was he who warned me; a runner came to him from the blockhouse, and advised him to bring mother and Molly and me to the post. When father got ready to do so, I reminded him of my engagement with you."

"What did he say to that?"

"Mother looked sad, and little Molly coaxed me to go with them, but father said that since I had given my word and you would be disappointed, I must keep my promise."

"Just like him!" exclaimed Hardin, admiringly; "he 's a true Kentuckian."

"Your father would have said the same to you."

"I guess he would; surely we 're big enough to take care of ourselves."

This conversation had occupied but a brief while, and, since it had established a full understanding, young Mayberry now resumed the swaying of his paddle, and the light canoe sped across the stream like a swallow, but in everything he did the youthful Kentuckian showed his training in woodcraft. When two thirds of the way over, and while heading for the precise spot which he had left to meet his friend, he turned the craft down stream, and putting his utmost strength in the effort drove it like an arrow toward a point fully a fourth of a mile below. He paddled as if his life were at stake, and there can be no certainty that such was not the fact.

The meaning of what might seem singular was that Mayberry feared that one or more Indians had followed his trail to the Ohio, and were awaiting the return of himself with his companion. His first course indicated a direct coming back until most of the stream was crossed, when he made the abrupt change of direction, travelling with a speed and an uncertainty of where he meant to land that prevented any foes being on the immediate spot to receive them.

Hardin understood this so clearly that he asked no questions, but his gaze was fixed upon the Kentucky shore, roaming back and forth in search of the " sign " that might appear at any moment and could only mean grave danger. Neither of the lads saw anything unusual, and Mayberry ran the boat under the exuberant limbs and so plumply against the bank that the two tipped forward from the suddenness of the stop.

The moment the prow of the canoe touched land, the two sprang out and pulled it so far up the bank that it could not be observed by any one passing along the river, nor would it be swept away by the current itself.

The Kentuckian took the lead, the other following closely behind in what may be termed " Indian file," where all of a party tread in the same tracks. They had much to say to each other, for they were lifelong friends and had been separated for weeks, but they hardly spoke except at long intervals, and then in guarded undertones.

Now, it must not be taken for granted that because the youths failed to see anything of their enemies, while crossing the Ohio, that none of their dusky foes saw them. Doubtless the precaution of the couple saved them for the time, for it is a fact that Ben Mayberry's trail had been discovered by five Shawanoes, prowling through the woods, and

CROSSING THE OHIO. *Page 8.*

they followed it with such skill and expedition that they arrived at the river's edge only a brief while behind him. Had he not resorted to the canoe which belonged to himself, and had been left there for use, they would have been upon him before he could have taken his friend on board.

Discovering the youths, the warriors carefully hid themselves among the undergrowth and awaited their return. Had the Kentuckian carried out what seemed to be his plan, the two would have entered the trap inextricably, but by an artifice that was as simple as ingenious they escaped the peril for the time. When the Shawanoes reached the spot where the boys had landed, they were gone.

But of necessity they left two things behind them. One was the canoe that had served the young Kentuckian so often and so well. With the help of their knives and tomahawks it took but a few minutes to cut and slash it beyond the possibility of ever being of account again. Indeed the birchen fragments hardly suggested the pretty frail structure that had once served the owner so well.

The other thing left by the youths was their trail. No matter how extreme their care, they could not hide the faint footprints from the keen eyes of the Shawanoes, whose skill in tracking an enemy was so wonderful that Simon Kenton once declared that they could trail a bird through the air, or a swimmer

in the water. While the ordinary, untrained gaze would have detected nothing unusual, that quintette of warriors, in their hideous paint and athirst for the lives of the pale faces, saw the footprints as unmistakably as we should have observed them in the dusty highway.

The action of the Shawanoes may be considered peculiar from the moment they left the river. Instead of following the trail in Indian file, one of their number devoted his attention to keeping track of their victims, while the others scattered to the right and left. By doing this, the party covered an extent of more than a hundred yards. They kept substantially abreast of one another, watching the guide, so that when he deviated to the right and left, they did the same, and the relative distances between them were preserved.

It was now nearly noon, and though the sun was unusually strong for the season, its rays scarcely penetrated the twilight of the woods, where it was cool and comfortable. Since the trailers knew that the young men would not linger in their flight, it was necessary for their pursuers to move briskly to overtake them. At the same time, they had seen enough to understand that the two were no amateurs in woodcraft, and that a slight inadvertence or carelessness on their part would warn the two of their danger and make their capture more difficult.

It would not have been difficult for these five Indians to shoot the youths while in their canoe, for at one time less than half the width of the Ohio separated them, and the shot was easy, but they refrained, as almost any of their race will do when he looks upon the capture of his enemy as among the certainties. The instant death of a foe may be desirable, but, under ordinary circumstances, the pleasure of torturing him is too tempting to be neglected. They looked upon the capture of the couple as inevitable, and therefore awaited the time when they should be fully in their power before wreaking their hatred upon them.

The five Shawanoes had not penetrated far into the Kentucky wilderness, when the middle man, who was devoting his attention to trailing the lads, made an oblique change in his course. Instead of going directly ahead, he turned to the right. This indicated that the youths, for some cause, had deviated from the straight line they had been following. The matter was of no importance, and the pursuers imitated them, with hardly a slackening of their pace.

The ground, which had been comparatively level, grew more undulating. There was nothing in the nature of mountains, nor was the surface sufficiently rough to cause any inconvenience or delay their advance, but they must have viewed with grim

pleasure the fact that the line of flight by the fugitives, as they may be considered, led directly toward the clearing where more than three hundred Shawanoes were gathered preparatory to joining larger bodies of their own countrymen and warriors of other tribes, preliminary to making their raid upon the exposed settlements along the frontier.

The pursuers had penetrated to a distance of a half-mile from the river, when they descended a slight declivity, where the wood was comparatively free from undergrowth, and the guide was seen to stop suddenly, as if he had made a discovery. Although the forest was free from anything resembling a pathway, and showed no signs of having been recently passed through by any one except the two youths, it was familiar to all of the Shawanoes. The four instantly recognized the spot where their companion had halted as a clear, cool spring of water. They also ceased walking, and waited for him to resume his advance before doing the same.

Instead of leaving the spot, the redskin looked up, and, glancing from right to left, beckoned them to approach. He made no sound, nor did they, as they obeyed, the five coming together within the following minute. In answer to their looks of inquiry, he pointed down at the spring. It was no more than two or three feet in diameter, with the water as clear as crystal. In truth, some of the

poetical Shawanoes had given it the Indian name of "A-wa-wa," signifying "liquid summer air," a title that it well deserved.

A single glance revealed that the boys had stopped there to quench their thirst, the imprints of their hands and knees, as well as of their feet, showing where they had kneeled down to quaff the refreshing water. This, however, was so natural and what was to be expected that the four who had been called to the spot might have complained had not their keen vision answered the question in their minds. Upon rising, the youths had not continued their walk in company. Instead, they separated, one going to the right and the other to the left. It was evident that the Shawanoes failed to understand the meaning of this change from their Indian file, and they held a brief consultation over the discovery.

Another fact impressed itself upon them: the spring was near the large, natural clearing where the Shawanoes were gathered and engaged in their athletic exercises preliminary to taking the war-path. In the stillness of the woods, sounds reached the warriors which they readily recognized as coming from their friends.

One of the youths had taken a route that led him toward the Shawanoe encampment, while the other had borne to the left. Had they diverged but

slightly, still maintaining the same general course, the Indians would have concluded that the two had set out to gain a view of the stirring sight near them, for they must have heard some of the shouting and cries of the excited warriors.

The conclusion reached by the red men perhaps was natural, being that the youths had had a quarrel and separated in anger. They would not be the first white persons to do a thing like that, and the red men had had experience themselves of the same nature.

It took but a brief while to formulate this theory, when the members of the little party considered the best course to take in view of the changed conditions. The decision in this case was reached as speedily as in the other. Two of the warriors were to follow the lad that had turned to the right, while three trailed the other. This would guarantee the capture of both, who had not yet had time to diverge very far. In truth, it looked as if the young man who had gone to the right was lurking in the neighborhood of the Shawanoe encampment, and it was the easiest thing conceivable to effect his capture. As for the other, it might require a few minutes longer, but he was doomed.

From the halting until the resumption of the pursuit could not have been more than five minutes—certainly not sufficient to produce any effect upon

this rather singular flight and pursuit. Since the paths diverged so abruptly, the two divisions of the Shawanoes quickly passed from sight of each other, though, because of the absence of undergrowth, they had only to look around, even when at a considerable distance, to see one another's figures flitting among the trees.

And yet hardly had they vanished from mutual view when a guarded signal from the smaller company conveyed the news to the larger that an important discovery had been made,—a discovery which instantly checked the three, and the next minute caused them to hurry away to rejoin their companions.

CHAPTER II.

A CHANGE OF SITUATION.

MEANWHILE, George Hardin and Ben Mayberry were threading their way through the Kentucky forest, watchful, alert, and on their guard against the sinister red men, who, the youths did not need to be told, would show them scant mercy, should they fall into their power. The Kentuckian was in advance, his friend keeping only a few paces behind him, as they steadily penetrated deeper into the wilderness, on the road to the home of the young man, whose intention it was to visit the deserted dwelling, after which they would follow his parents to the friendly blockhouse.

Suddenly the guide stopped, or rather both lads did, for the sound that arrested their footsteps was heard by both. It was the faintest possible rustling, which might mean nothing or a great deal. A second told the truth, and, turning his head, Ben met the glance of his companion, and the two smiled, for they had perceived the cause of their alarm. It was so late in the season, that here and there leaves were continually wavering downward like the fall of

snowflakes, but one of them, from an oak on their right, gave out a slightly louder rustling than usual, as it fluttered among the limbs and impinged against the brown carpet under their feet.

But it was precisely the sound that the moccasin of the stealthy Shawanoe would have made, had the warrior forgotten his caution. Nevertheless, the boys kept their motionless position for several minutes, before Ben whispered:

"It was only a leaf."

"That is all."

"But we are getting close to their camp."

"Why not bear to the left, Ben?" asked Hardin, who saw no sense in running a risk that offered them no advantage.

"I 'll do so at the spring."

Hardin nodded his head to signify that the proposal was agreeable, and the advance was pressed with the same caution as before. Both were athirst, and the spring of water was well known to them. They could have slaked their thirst from the Ohio, which has served that good office to untold thousands of men and animals, but nothing was so tempting as the cold, crystal fountain that bubbled in the forest, and because of that, they saved their thirst until they should reach it.

The fact that nothing of an alarming nature was seen or heard until near the little fountain increased

the confidence of the lads that they would make their way to the cabin, which was their destination, without a collision with the red men.

"Well," said Ben, with a sigh of anticipated enjoyment, as he removed his cap and drew his handkerchief across his damp forehead, "we are here, and now for a good, old-fashioned drink."

Laying his cap beside him on the ground, where he had first placed his gun, he lay down, and with his lips against the clear surface, took a long, deep draught, which sent life and vigor through his young frame. Then, with another sigh of enjoyment, he rose to his feet and made room for his companion, who did the same.

"That 's worth a half-dozen miles' tramp through the woods," remarked Hardin.

"I have walked more than that many a time for a drink. Sometimes I have nursed my thirst at home until it tormented me, and then made a bee-line for this place, my only fear being that the spring would give out before I got enough."

"There are plenty of springs on our side of the river, but it seems to me there is none quite so clear and cold as this."

"There is n't; if the Indians burn our cabin, I shall urge father, when peace comes again, to put up the house a little nearer this spot, so that we can draw our supply from the spring. Why would n't

it be a good idea," said Ben, with a sudden inspiration, " for us to build the house right over the spring ? "

" What good would that do you ? "

" Think how handy it would be, if the Indians besieged us; they could never cut off our supply of water, and, if they should set fire to the building, we should have enough to put out the flames."

" There is something in that," was the thoughtful reply of Hardin, " and I wonder that more people don't think of it——"

" Sh! do you hear that ? "

No need of the question, for the sounds were too distinct to be mistaken. The Shawanoes in the large, natural opening seemed to have been quiet for some time, but now their cries rang out with startling clearness. Whoops, shouts, and excited exclamations were uttered by a score of warriors, as if they had leaped from the ground simultaneously and resumed the ceremonies by which they roused their passions to the irrestrainable point, as the Sioux nearly a century later did through the medium of their ghost-dances.

" Ben," said his comrade, after this had continued for a few minutes, " the best thing for us to do is to get farther away from those people; some of them may come out to the spring for a drink."

"Let 's have a look at them; we can steal near enough to do so through the trees without their seeing us; we shall have news then to take to the blockhouse."

George Hardin was not pleased with the proposal, but his friend had given him a good-natured slur earlier in the day, and he did not mean that he should have the opportunity to repeat it. So, against his own judgment, he replied with pretended eagerness:

"Not a bad idea; lead on, and I 'll follow, or why not let *me* take the lead?"

"No need of changing places—hello!"

A sound, the nature of which neither understood, came to them from the opposite direction. It might have been the call of a bird, or possibly it was a signal from one of their enemies. At any rate, it put a new face on matters, and the youths stood a moment, undecided what to do.

"I 'll try to find out what it means," said Hardin; "wait here for me."

"No need of losing the time; while you are doing that, I 'll take a peep at the war party."

The plan was an imprudent one, which was rather singular, proposed as it was by the Kentuckian, who had displayed so much caution and woodcraft from the first, but a certain chivalry was at the bottom of it. He had observed that his comrade did not

favor the plan of a closer approach to the war party, nor indeed of lingering in the neighborhood. Ben was convinced that the last sound which reached them came from a prowling wolf, that was probably on his way to the spring, when he was scared off by sight of the boys. By sending Hardin in that direction, therefore, under a plausible excuse, he would be removed from the greater peril into which the Kentuckian was about to enter.

Without penetrating his purpose, Hardin accepted the proposal, for nothing was clearer to him than the duty of watching every point from which danger threatened.

"We must understand each other," he said, as they were about to separate; "how shall we come together again?"

"If you discover anything wrong, signal to me, and I 'll hurry back; it won't be long, anyway, before I 'll be with you."

With this, the youths parted, without a ripple upon their strong friendship, despite the belief of the Shawanoes who arrived at the spring a short time after, and discovered what had taken place.

The Kentuckian had gone but a little way when he looked around. George Hardin was just passing from view among the tree trunks, but he noticed that he was not following a direct line. He had turned to the right, as if there had been a repetition

of the sound which drew him from the spring, but from a different point than where first heard.

It was necessary for Hardin himself to deviate from a straight course, though not to a marked extent. Nevertheless, had they continued their respective routes, they would have described two arcs of a great circle and finally met. Before such an eventuality could take place, Ben decided upon a change of plan.

"This is wrong," he reflected, as if suddenly awaking to his own remissness; "this is the last place where we should part company; if one gets into trouble, the other can't help him; I know enough already to tell an interesting story to the folks at the blockhouse. I 've learned that there are several hundred Shawanoe warriors getting ready to take the war-path, and it won't add much to my knowledge to have a look at them, while the chances are that they 'll nab me before I can get away. I 'll go back to George, and we 'll leave as quick as we know how."

Perhaps it was not singular that the musings of young Hardin were somewhat similar in nature. He had hardly passed beyond sight of his friend, when a shadowy figure flitted among the trees in front of him. A glimpse identified it as a wolf, whose lank body darted deeper into the wood, quickly vanishing from sight; but before it dis-

appeared, Hardin, in obedience to his training, brought his gun to his shoulder and sighted at the animal that had dared thus to defy him. His aim was so quick that he had but to press the trigger of his weapon to send the bullet through the skull of the brute, but it was as fortunate for the young hunter as for the wolf itself that he refrained from doing so. The report of the rifle would have brought some of the Shawanoes to the spot before Hardin could flee, and it was providential, we repeat, that his own danger impressed itself upon him before it was too late.

He had stopped in his cautious advance, and now peered about him.

"This looks as if I were deserting Ben," he reflected; "he has gone into danger, while I have been going away from it; I am not treating him right."

He was on the point of turning to retrace his steps, when his comrade appeared among the trees.

"I agree with you that we can't get out of this neighborhood too soon," he explained; "it would have been better had we borne more to the left and kept away from the spring altogether."

"Did you see anything of the Shawanoes?"

"No; but I heard them plainly enough; let 's be off."

As before, the Kentuckian took the lead, and

they pressed forward for several hundred yards, when they entered a portion of the wood where the undergrowth was denser, and they were forced to pick their way with more care. Nothing had been seen of their enemies as yet, and when they reached a fallen tree they sat down side by side, leaning their guns against the primitive bench, where they were within immediate reach.

"I am sure," said Hardin, "that some of the Indians will come to the spring to drink when they are thirsty, and the soft earth around it will reveal our trail. I wonder whether they will attempt to follow us."

As he spoke, he looked back over their course, as well as the luxuriant undergrowth would permit. But there was no sign of life, nor could the listening ears detect any sound that could cause misgiving.

"There 's no saying what a Shawanoe will do, except to do all he can to injure our people; but I think they have more important business on hand than to lose any time in trailing us."

"Would it be lost time, Ben?"

"That can't be told until it is tried; they have mighty keen eyes, but even a Shawanoe can't tell whether a trail like ours is five minutes or five hours old, and it is that which makes all the difference in the world."

"How far is it to your house?"

"Not more than three or four miles; a little way ahead we shall strike the path leading from the river, which we left or rather kept away from, so as to get a drink from the spring; then we shall be able to make better time."

"And the blockhouse is about five miles beyond?"

"That 's it, as nearly as I can figure out."

"Why not go straight there, instead of to your home?"

"I would do so, if our house and the post were not in a line, and we shall lose no time by taking a peep at the cabin. I am curious to know whether the Indians have paid it a visit; one look will be enough for that."

"It can't be that your folks stayed there?"

The young Kentuckian shook his head.

"I saw them leave for the blockhouse; they went south and I north; if nothing happened to them," he added, in a slightly tremulous voice, "they reached the blockhouse by the time I struck the Ohio and before I shoved my canoe from shore——"

While this conversation was going on, the youths were glancing to the right and left and listening for sounds of danger. They heard none, but the sentence of Ben Mayberry was unfinished, when a

remarkable thing occurred: his long, heavy rifle, leaning against the log at his side, disappeared!

He was not looking at it just then, but it was in his field of vision, and he became aware that it had been whisked out of sight with the noiselessness of the flitting of a bird's wing as it darted past his face.

It was a startling occurrence, made more so if possible by the fact that precisely the same thing occurred with George Hardin: both rifles had darted behind them, as if each was attached to a string that had been snapped by the same hand.

Strange, that with all their woodcraft and with their keen glimpses to the right and left and rear, they discovered nothing of the three Shawanoes stealing upon them from behind, while two others did the same from the front. The close undergrowth and thick array of trees favored the red men, who, having located the youths whom they had been trailing for several miles, completed their advance with the skill of perfect masters of woodcraft.

The two in front having secured a position which commanded the lads, assumed the role of reserves as may be said. That is to say, they held themselves ready to end the business by firing upon the couple from their concealment in the event of any slip preventing the success of the three creeping forward from the opposite direction.

But the recourse was unnecessary, for, aided by

the advantages of that portion of the wood, the three drew near in absolute silence, able to shield themselves from discovery when the youths looked around. Hardin and Mayberry were close enough to each other to clasp hands, had they wished to do so, without shifting their position. Thus they sat, when one of the crouching warriors reached forward and snatched the weapon from beyond reach of the owner, while his comrade did precisely the same thing with the other.

The instant Ben checked his words he leaped to his feet and faced the other way, Hardin being hardly a second behind him. As they did so, they confronted three Shawanoes, two of whom held their rifles. They had recoiled a step, and the painted countenances were made more hideous by the grins which showed the gleam of the wolfish teeth between the coppery lips.

It was a woful lesson, and it looked as if the cost was to be their lives.

"Heavens!" gasped Ben; "we have been caught after all."

"Can't we help ourselves? Let 's make a run for it!".

Hopeless as was this resort, it would have been attempted, but for an unexpected and insurmountable obstacle. The boys gathered their muscles for a desperate dash through the wood, when they knew

the Shawanoes could easily run down both without difficulty (for that tribe included some of the fleetest runners in the world), and, if it were possible they failed to do that, the Indians could readily shoot both fugitives before they ran a dozen paces.

Nevertheless, as we have said, the effort would have been made had not the youths discovered at hat moment two other warriors, who stepped from behind the trees directly in front, and with their guns held ready for use, advanced toward them. The American Indian is not a creature of emotion, and can hold his feelings in check under all circumstances, but the last two must have thought that the situation warranted them in joining in the grinning of their companions on the other side of the discomfited youths.

No capture could have been managed more deftly. Ben and George would have fought to the death had the opportunity been given, but not the remotest chance presented itself. One moment they felt secure, and the next, presto! they were disarmed. The rifles, upon which they placed their chief reliance, were as much beyond their reach as if they lay at the bottom of the Ohio.

Some of the pioneers carried awkward, flintlock pistols at their girdles, but the majority owned no other weapon beside their rifles and the hunting knife, which served them at close quarters, and was

indispensable in cutting bits of wood for the camp fire or in carving meat for their meals. The youths, therefore, had no firearms left at command, and neither of them was imprudent enough to draw the weapon carried at his waist. They were prisoners to the Shawanoes—the tribe that had done more than any other in the West to drive back the tide of emigration that threatened to sweep them and their race out of existence.

With the appearance of the other party, the youths yielded. They saw no hope left, and submitted with a grim philosophy which Simon Kenton nor Daniel Boone could have surpassed. They had learned from their parents and from the frontier scouts who had spent their lives in the West, that the worst course for them under the trying circumstances was to show fear or to beg for mercy. Therefore they did neither, but, without attempting to cheer each other, when such a thing was impossible, calmly awaited the will of their captors.

They were not kept waiting. The Shawanoe standing nearest Ben Mayberry pointed in the direction of the clearing and said "Go!" As if to make sure his command was understood, he smote the lad on the cheek with a violence that sent him forward several steps and nearly carried him off his feet. It was a savage blow, and caused the youth so much pain and such flaming anger that only by a strong

effort could he restrain himself from whipping out his knife and leaping at his tormentor. Hardin was equally angered by the outrage, but compressed his lips and held his breath to prevent himself from resenting the act. He expected a similar blow, and, to avert it, stepped briskly after his comrade, who, poising himself, walked as if nothing out of the usual order had taken place.

There was no attempt now to proceed in Indian file. The youths kept side by side, with their captors straggling about them. One maintained his place well in front, so as to prevent the party from going astray. It was not far to their destination, and a few minutes later they debouched into the natural opening referred to, where the boys entered upon a strange scene.

The cleared space was fully an acre in extent. Such natural openings are not uncommon in some portions of our country, and they were often turned to account by the Indians for purposes already intimated. No squaws or children were in sight—only full-grown warriors and bucks being present, for this gathering was in every respect a business one.

CHAPTER III.

A FRIEND AT COURT.

WITHIN this open space were gathered more than two hundred of the leading warriors of the Shawanoe tribe. All were painted in the frightful manner that showed they had gone upon the war-path. They had their rifles, their tomahawks, and knives, and were exercising with them, as civilized soldiers drill while preparing for battle.

In several places, at the sides of the clearing, some of the warriors were throwing their tomahawks at marks on the trunks of the trees. The skill shown in most cases was almost incredible. Standing twenty or more paces away, a brawny buck would draw his hand back over his shoulder, and then make a lightning-like flirt forward. Instantly the gleaming missile left his hand, and, turning end over end with such swiftness as it shot through the air that the eye could not follow its movements, it would strike the solid wood with a thud that, had there been no interfering noises, could have been heard several hundred feet away. Invariably the keen blade, made of metal (for the people had long

discarded the stone implements of their ancestors), would sink deeply into the tree, with the handle quivering from the forceful impact. Not once in twenty times did the blade fail to strike squarely and to stick fast.

The mark, as a rule, was a slight spot where the shaggy bark had been chipped away so as to show the white gleam of the inner surface, and the warrior who failed to drive the edge of his tomahawk into the centre of this bright spot—in other words, failed to make a "bull's eye"—received the contemptuous grins of his companions, and felt ashamed of himself. There were few misses, and some of the veterans buried their hatchets again and again in the same crevice with the unerring accuracy of a rifle shot.

Several spent their time in throwing their hunting knives, much in the same manner and with the same remarkable skill. If, through some mischance, a Shawanoe was deprived of gun and tomahawk, and his foe was at a considerable distance, his hunting knife was likely to prove one of the most effective of weapons.

In other portions of the plain, Indians were running races, and the exhibitions of speed under less ominous circumstances would have been of the highest interest to the youths who were fleet of foot and fond of similar tests. There were groups

talking eagerly together, several couples were wrestling, and fully a dozen were engaged in leaping contests. Like so many children freed from the restraints of school, these warriors, generally glum and self-controlled, gave outlet to their feelings by shouts, cavortings, and whoops that would have struck terror to the hearts of those who understood the real meaning of the remarkable assemblage.

The arrival of the prisoners gave a new turn to the excitement. Some of the warriors who were running, changed the direction of their flight, so as to bring them to the side of the clearing where the five bucks appeared with their captives. A number were standing near, and looked inquiringly at the youths. Only those who were at the most distant point gave them no attention, though they could not fail to notice the arrivals.

George Hardin and Ben Mayberry did not speak to each other. They were kept slightly apart, but not far enough to prevent their communicating had they been so disposed. But what could they do to cheer each other, when both firmly believed that their doom had been fixed from the moment of their capture? They exchanged glances now and then, but their faces were pale and their hearts throbbed painfully. Young as they were, all their lives had been spent on the frontier, and they knew the cruelties of which the red men were fond. The

father of Hardin had once been a fellow-prisoner with the great scout, Simon Kenton, through whose help he effected his escape after he had been tied to the stake and the torch was on the point of being applied to the pile of wood at his feet. Kenton had sat at their fireside and told his thrilling experiences with the Shawanoes, Wyandots, and other tribes, and the history of Colonel Crawford was familiar to all. That unfortunate commander was not only overwhelmingly defeated by the Indians against whom he marched, but he was made prisoner and burned to death at the stake, amid the gibes of Simon Girty, the renegade, and accompanied by agonies too dreadful to be recalled. All these and many other legends were familiar to the boys, who held not a doubt that they were doomed to be added to the long list of victims of the ferocious hatred of the red men, who were rallying for a united effort to beat back the advance of the pale faces into their hunting-grounds.

We have no wish to harrow the feelings of the reader by describing a scene which, alas! was only too common on the frontier within the past century. But beyond question, the young captives would have been subjected to a death that would make one shudder to recall, but for a deliverance as remarkable as it was unexpected. One of the favorite methods of gaining entertainment from their help-

less captives was for the Indians to make them run the gauntlet. Little hope would either of the lads have had of reaching the farther end of two rows of warriors, between whom they would have to speed, while the savages clubbed them mercilessly as they came within reach. The most popular form of torture, however, was to tie them to trees and build fires about them, from which there was no possible escape.

But none of these appalling trials awaited our young friends. They had not stood five minutes on the edge of the clearing, so surrounded that flight was out of the question, when three Indians approached from a point a hundred feet distant. The middle one walked so fast that he left the others behind, though they followed him, as if they knew what was coming.

There was something in the appearance of this Indian which showed him to be the leader and chief of all the other chiefs and sachems. It was not in his dress, for that was not so conspicuous as that of many of the younger warriors, but it was in his face, his manner, his mien. He was in the prime of life, rather under than above the usual stature, and with just enough inclination to corpulency to make his figure round and attractive. He wore the usual hunting shirt, moccasins, and leggings, with knife and tomahawk in the girdle which spanned his

waist. His long, black hair dangled about his shoulders, and a couple of stained eagle feathers protruded from the crown. He carried a long, formidable rifle in his right hand, and strode forward as a king might have done, as in truth he was, for he was Tecumseh, the greatest American Indian that ever lived, an unsurpassable warrior, a natural statesman, and a chivalrous foe. He ruled by the power of his imperial genius, and no matter what he said or did, the most daring of his race feared to oppose by so much as a look.

Advancing straight to where the boys stood, he fixed his bright, black eyes upon them, glancing from one to the other, with the quick, flitting movement of a bird that is watching the approach of some one whose intentions it suspects without being sure. The face of Tecumseh was not painted, and that the wonderful Shawanoe was handsome was admitted by his most bitter enemies. His nose was slightly Roman, he had white and even teeth, and the countenance was an almost perfect oval. He would have attracted attention anywhere, for through that dusky face glowed the soul that has given the extraordinary man a reputation never attained by any of his race.

Let us pause at this point to recall some facts about Tecumseh, who has a prominent part to play in the pages that follow. We confess to a strong

liking for him—a liking in which we are not alone, as is proven by the number of places in different parts of the country named in his honor—one that has been borne by many of our best people, as in the case of General Sherman, one of the leaders in the War for the Union.

Tecumseh, sometimes spelled Tecumtha, was born about the year 1768, and was a triplet. One of his brothers was an ordinary warrior, who has left no record of his doings. The other was only second to Tecumseh himself in renown. He was Ellskwatawa, generally called The Prophet, who claimed to be a great medicine man, and attained considerable influence over his race, though it never equalled that of Tecumseh, of whom The Prophet stood in awe.

Tecumseh grew up among his people, who at that time formed the most formidable tribe of Indians in Ohio and Kentucky. While a boy, he was noted for his daring, skill, and success as a hunter and warrior. He shared with his tribe their hatred of the white race, that had invaded the hunting-grounds of his people, and none was more active than he in fighting back the emigrants who threatened to bring ruin and devastation to all the red men of the country.

While a boy, he accompanied a small party of his warriors on a raid against some exposed settlers.

The raid was successful, and, in accordance with the principles of his adult companions, they inflicted several deaths by torture. Tecumseh, instead of taking part in the barbarity, was horrified, and it is a proof of the amazing influence he gained over his race that he made every one of his companions promise never to inflict torture upon any other captives who might fall into their hands.

Such chivalry of sentiment on the part of a warrior is apt to weaken his power, and to cause him to be looked upon as effeminate, or as a "squaw," as such persons were often contemptuously called. But it was not so with Tecumseh, whose commanding greatness grew with his years. While still a young man, he fell into the habit of drinking the fire-water which was readily obtained from the white traders. He developed so great a fondness for it, that for months he was almost continuously under its influence, and the man who would have dared at that time to prophesy a great future for him would have been scoffed at.

But it was in this very respect that he gave evidence of his real greatness. There were no temperance societies among the Indians, no cure to avail oneself of, but the young Shawanoe chieftain saw that he was not only rushing to ruin himself, but was leading others thither by his example. He straightway stopped his indulgence, and either per-

suaded or scared scores of his people into leaving the poison alone.

"It is deadlier than their big guns," he said; "it will slay us all unless we cast it from us like a snake that has fastened its fangs in our arm."

Tecumseh was original in his temperance work as in everything he did. He came upon a brother chief who was in the act of elevating a black jug to his lips. Tecumseh did not need to catch a whiff of the rank stuff to understand its nature. Leaping forward, he snatched the jug from the hand of the other, whose lips retained their pucker as he turned angrily upon the one that had dared to interfere with his enjoyment. Before, however, he could make protest, Tecumseh broke the crockery over the crown of the other chieftain, with the announcement that if he ever caught him trying to indulge again in the poison, he would substitute the butt of his rifle for the jug, so as to make sure of cracking his skull. It may be safely presumed that the grieved Shawanoe became a true temperance man, at any rate as long as he was within reach of Tecumseh's wrath.

All our readers are familiar with the outrages perpetrated by the Indians along the Ohio upon the settlements of that region, a short time after the close of the Revolution. These became so intolerable that President Washington sent several expedi-

tions to bring the tribes to terms. Crawford, as already stated, was defeated, and then a more important expedition was almost destroyed while under the leadership of St. Clair, a companion-in-arms of Washington, who had repeatedly warned him against a surprise and ambush by the Indians. St. Clair, despite these warnings, committed the very blunder that proved fatal. When news reached Washington, he gave way to a tempest of indignation that terrified every one within hearing, for the disaster of St. Clair was without excuse.

When the great man had recovered his usual self-control, he expressed regret for the outburst, but added that he would send a man to the West who would do the work that was beyond the capacity of those that had already tried it, and he kept his word by despatching thither the dashing, but skilled general, "Mad Anthony" Wayne. At Fallen Timbers, in 1794, Wayne delivered a crushing defeat to the combined tribes, with whose leaders he made a treaty which brought security and safety to the frontier that lasted until the mutterings of the War of 1812 were heard.

Among the most conspicuous leaders at Fallen Timbers was Tecumseh, many of whose exploits compelled the admiration of the bravest of Wayne's forces. His heart was set upon winning that battle, and had the others fought with the daring and skill

of the Shawanoe chieftain, there might have been a different story to tell, though the Kentuckians and their comrades were heroes, every one of them.

Tecumseh did not favor the treaty of Greenville, by which the different tribes gave up a large area of land and bound themselves to preserve peace, but when the compact was made, none observed it more conscientiously than he. He took no part in the forays against the settlers that were stealthily kept up in some quarters, but opposed them, and led the life of a hunter and tiller of the patch of ground which surrounded the cabin where he made his home with his wife and young son.

But there must have been growing within him at that time an abiding faith in his own mission as the leader of his people. Like Philip of Mount Hope, and Pontiac, chief of the Ottawas, Tecumseh believed that, by a union of all the tribes, an effectual bar could be offered to the advance of the whites into their territory, but the Shawanoe was wiser than the Wampanoag and the Ottawa, for he never indulged the wild dream that such a union could be carried to the extent of destroying every pale face in the land (a faith which perhaps was not so wild in the case of Philip, when there were comparatively few white people in the country), but he was certain that such a union could be made to compel the Americans to act justly toward the Indians—a feat

which was never accomplished in the past, and, sad to say, is not likely ever to be accomplished in the future.

To understand that which follows, the position of Tecumseh in this dispute must be made clear. His contention was that no single tribe of Indians had the right to sell any of their lands, inasmuch as it did not belong to them as a tribe, but to all the tribes, whose united assent must be obtained in order to perfect the title of the white men to any portion of the continent. The natural conclusion of this argument was that (its truth being admitted) very few, if any of the States, had a right to the land they occupied. In justice, therefore, they should give it back to the original inhabitants, the title remaining in abeyance until such time as the transfer could be effected upon the basis named.

This was the position taken by the Shawanoe leader, and from which no argument or protest could force him. It was legitimate, as following his premises, but it was a view which could not be accepted by General William Henry Harrison, Governor of the Northwest Territory, nor by any of the American authorities, for to accept it would have overturned the Western country itself.

Returning from this digression, it may be added that George Hardin and Ben Mayberry recognized Tecumseh when they saw him approaching. In

fact, when comparative peace reigned on the frontier, the Shawanoe had crossed the threshold of both their homes, and had sat at the table of the Kentuckian, but at such times there was always a dignity and reserve about the chief which prevented anything in the nature of familiarity, and now closed the lips of the youths from making an appeal to him, when he halted but a few paces in front of them.

The boys had heard of his chivalrous treatment of prisoners, but hardly dared to hope that he would restore them to freedom. He might prevent their torture, but since war was impending, if it had not actually broken out, he would probably hold them secure until they could be exchanged, or perhaps leave them to meet death when his own duties caused him to withdraw his vigilance.

But they failed to give the chieftain the credit he deserved. He knew what would befall the captives without his active friendship, and to use a common expression he did not intend to take any chances.

He held his place as has been described, glancing from one to the other with that peculiar flitting movement which was exceedingly trying to the lads, who, fixing their own gaze upon the coppery face, repressed all evidence of fear—a feat which it is safe to conclude, pleased him who had no patience with timidity in any one.

Ben Mayberry as he afterward remarked, believed it would help him if he should appeal to the acquaintance of Tecumseh, but he was afraid to do so. There was that in the stern, immobile face, with its flashing eyes, which forbade so much presumption on his part.

Turning to the warrior who held the rifle of Hardin, Tecumseh ordered him to return it, and the Indian complied as promptly as a child could have done. Then the chieftain turned to the other, who, without waiting for the order, stepped forward and handed the weapon of Mayberry to him. This little incident left no doubt of the friendly intention of Tecumseh, and lifted a mountain from the hearts of the youthful prisoners.

Hitherto the leader had spoken in Shawanoe, but his knowledge of English enabled him to converse as readily in one tongue as the other. Addressing himself to Ben, he asked:

"Why are you here?"

"I was on my way home, when your warriors made prisoner of me, and I could not help myself."

"Go to your home; tell your people to hurry to the blockhouse or the settlement, for the red men have dug up the hatchet, and some of them will soon be here."

"They have already fled to the blockhouse," re-

plied Ben, with as much deference as if talking with Washington himself.

"Why did you not go with them?" sternly asked Tecumseh.

"I went to the Ohio to meet my friend who had set out to visit me."

The black eyes were now turned upon Hardin, who fairly trembled.

"You live yonder," said Tecumseh, pointing to the northward, or in the direction of the Ohio, and evidently recognizing the youth; "go back to your people; you are children; you have no business to be alone in the woods; I give you your liberty this time, but I shall not do so again; now make haste; let me see you no more."

And the chieftain turned his back upon them, as if other matters required his attention, while the youths, it need hardly be said, lost no time in taking advantage of the offer made to them.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO FRIENDS AND ENEMIES.

THE Northwest Territory consisted of the area west of Pennsylvania, north of the Ohio River, and east of the Mississippi. It came under the control of the Continental Congress by reason of the cessions made by New York in 1782, Virginia in 1784, Massachusetts in 1785, and Connecticut in 1786. It was organized by the ordinance of 1787, among the provisions being the prohibition of slavery and the taking up of lands except by purchase from the Indians, and the offering of them for sale by the United States. Arthur St. Clair was Governor of the Territory from 1788 to 1802, when Ohio was admitted to the Union. In 1805 the western portions were organized as the Territory of Indiana, and the northern as the Territory of Michigan.

Previous to this, William Henry Harrison, afterward ninth President of the United States, had become identified with that vast but sparsely settled section. He was a native of Virginia, was educated at Hampden Sidney College, but entered the army at an early age and fought at Wayne's victory over

the Indians in 1794. He was Secretary of the Northwest Territory in 1798, and the following year a delegate to Congress. He succeeded St. Clair as Governor of Northwest Territory, holding that place at the time of the breaking out of the War of 1812.

Governor Harrison was a close observer of events, and foresaw the troubles that were likely to come because of the resentment of Tecumseh and the machinations of the British agents who were doing their utmost to foment war between the various tribes of the Northwest and the United States. It was on the day succeeding the events described in the previous chapters, that Governor, or as he is more popularly known, General Harrison, who was on a tour with two members of his staff, approached the Ohio from the north, selecting the spot known as the Shawanoe Crossing. His runners had brought him information of the growing discontent among the red men, and still hopeful of being able to avert the war with its fearful consequences to the border, he had sent a message to Tecumseh, asking him to meet him for a talk. The chieftain replied that he would be at the place named on the date referred to, just after the sun had crossed the meridian. General Harrison and his companions were mounted on excellent horses, and by following the well-beaten trails and primitive highways, they arrived at the spot somewhat ahead of the appointed time. It so

happened that Tecumseh did the same, so that the arrival of the two at opposite banks of the stream was nearly simultaneous.

Looking across the river, Harrison discerned a group of Indians standing near the shore, as if awaiting the appearance of some one. Placing his glasses to his eyes, the General, who was in uniform, scrutinized the group for a moment, and then remarked with considerable satisfaction:

"It 's Tecumseh and three of his warriors. He is as prompt as ourselves."

"We shall wait here for them?" was the inquiring remark of Colonel Preston, one of the Governor's aides.

"It is a matter of no importance."

"I would not trust those people," added Major Burbank, the third member of the visitors; "all of them are treacherous; we shall be safer on this side, where we have our horses and a good line trail to follow."

"I should not trust them if Tecumseh were not their leader," remarked General Harrison; "I have placed myself in his power more than once, as he has done with me—ah!"

Tecumseh, stepping from his companions, was seen to be waving a white handkerchief as a flag of truce. Colonel Preston smiled.

"I was not aware that the Shawanoes were par-

tial to handkerchiefs; I suppose the next thing with them will be umbrellas."

"Tecumseh always carries one or two, though I suspect that the chief use he puts them to is as signals. Well, that means that he wishes us to cross over to him."

"Are you satisfied that it is safe to trust him?" was the doubting inquiry of Colonel Preston; "you know there is unusual excitement among all the tribes."

"And this canoe lying against the bank to the right looks to me as if it had been placed there to tempt us into a trap," added the Major.

"There is no cause for alarm, gentlemen," replied the General, with some asperity; "but I do not wish to do violence to your superior judgment; you can remain here, while I paddle across in the canoe."

The grim soldier walked with a certain dignity to the spot where the little boat rested against the bank, intending to leave his companions behind. Their faces flushed under the rebuke, and before the General could reach the boat, Colonel Preston was ahead of him, with the Major at his heels. They said nothing, but their superior was only partially mollified and his face was stern when he seated himself at one end of the canoe, as if still half-minded to order them out. He held his peace,

however, and folding his arms, calmly watched the group which he was facing, while Colonel Preston plied the long paddle with the skill of a Shawanoe himself.

In ninety-nine instances out of a hundred, the protest of the two officers would have been commendable, for they were placing themselves wholly in the power of a group of men whose race is among the most treacherous in the world. All of the officers carried cumbersome pistols and swords with which they could give a good account of themselves in a hand-to-hand scrimmage, but not one had a rifle. Like the General, the other two were in uniform, a fact which, as a rule, increased their danger, since it required no very bright Indian to understand the importance of picking off the leaders in preference to the common soldiers.

Tecumseh and his companions were armed each with gun, knife, and tomahawk. While standing on the shore awaiting the approach of the canoe, it was the easiest matter in the world to shoot the three men, without giving them the first chance of defending themselves. It would be more in accordance, however, with Indian nature to await their arrival and until the interview had continued for some time, before falling upon them. What more easy and natural than for Tecumseh to place a score of his warriors in ambush with orders to open fire at

a signal from him? Many a time that very thing had been done before the day of General Harrison, and many a time has it been repeated in recent years.

No one could be more cutting than General Harrison when offended, and his aides preferred to incur any risk of assassination at the hands of the redskins to a second reproof from him. Accordingly, Colonel Preston paddled with vigor, as if it was hard to restrain his impatience to meet the Shawanoes and their leader. At the same time, both he and Major Burbank glanced stealthily at their side-arms to make sure they were ready for use.

General Harrison retained his place at the stern with folded arms, his thin lips compressed, and his keen eyes fixed upon the group they were approaching, while he seemed oblivious to the presence of his aides. As the boat drew near the shore, the companions of Tecumseh, evidently in obedience to his order, withdrew beyond hearing, and seated themselves on the ground.

"No doubt a part of his plan to throw us off our guard," thought the Colonel and Major, though neither gave expression to the fancy; "that leaves us within easy range when the chief signals to them to open fire."

Colonel Preston curved the course of the boat so as to thrust the end containing General Harrison

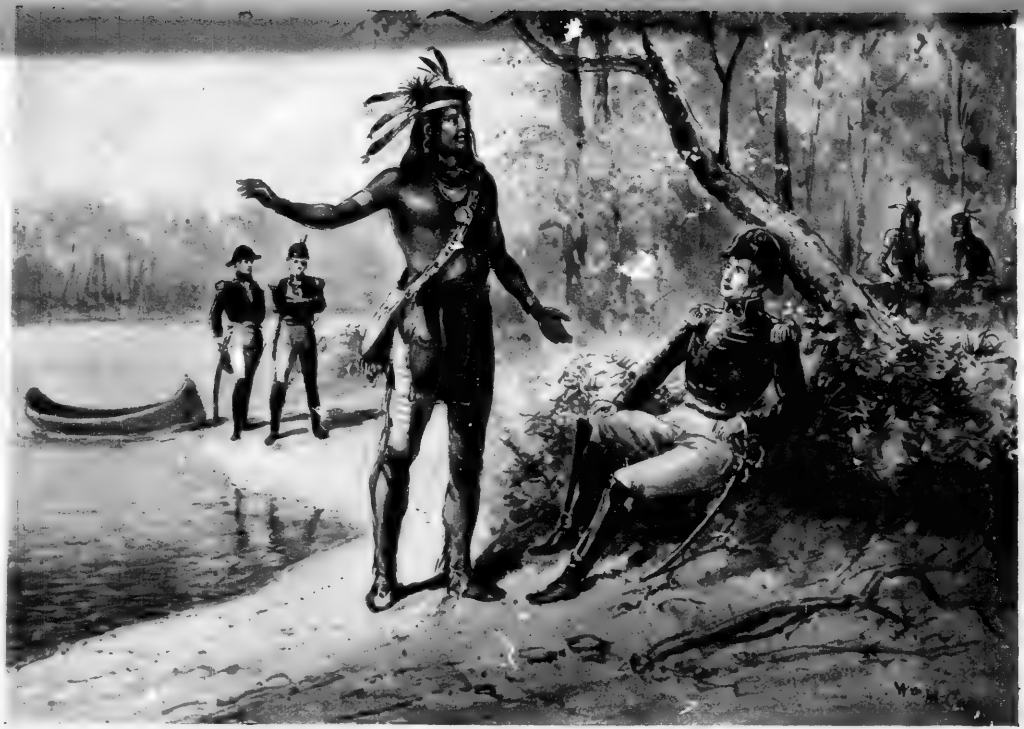
first against the bank. This was done lightly, and the Governor, who was familiar with the ways of the woods, stepped ashore and grasped the extended hand of the Shawanoe chieftain, whose manner indicated his pleasure at meeting his old friend. They exchanged the conventional greeting, and then Harrison turned to his aides and said:

"You will wait here until we are through."

The officers touched their fingers to their foreheads and bowed. Then at the invitation of Tecumseh, the General followed him several rods up stream and away from the group of warriors, who were watching proceedings. Thus the two leaders were beyond earshot of every one. Standing for a moment on the grassy, sloping bank of the stream, Harrison looked at the chieftain, and with a curious smile remarked:

"The earth is my mother, and I will rest on her bosom," and then he seated himself.

Tecumseh caught the point of this remark and smiled, for the incident to which it referred is historical. It was at a conference between General Harrison and a number of officers on the one hand and Tecumseh and a party of chiefs on the other, when the great Shawanoe, after finishing an address, turned to seat himself, and found no chair awaiting him. General Harrison made haste to repair the oversight, with suitable apology, but, declining the



GENERAL HARRISON AND TECUMSEH. *Page 52.*

chair, Tecumseh made the remark quoted by his visitor, and, folding his arms, seated himself on the ground, where he remained during the conference.

Harrison was a man of deeds rather than words, and sitting down nigh enough to touch the Shawanoe, said:

"I thank you, Tecumseh, for doing as I requested."

"Has Tecumseh ever refused to please his brother?" asked the chief, turning his head so as to look into the face of the Governor.

"No; Tecumseh is the greatest of his people; he never speaks with a double tongue, and he is as honorable an enemy as he is generous as a friend. It would delight my heart if we could always be friends."

"It will not be the fault of Tecumseh if we are not."

The Governor smiled at this rather neat reply, and, before he could frame a proper response, the chieftain added:

"My brother has but to do that which is right to bind Tecumseh and his people to him and his friends by cords that can never be broken."

"You say I have only to do right," remarked the Governor, earnestly; "and I make reply in the same words: it remains only for *you* to do what is right."

Tecumseh, like all his race, possessed a quick temper, and there was a flash of his black eyes as he slightly shifted his position and demanded:

"What has Tecumseh done that is not right?"

"I did not make myself quite clear—pardon me. When we met before, you told me that you would never live at peace with the white people until they gave up the land that they occupied and secured the consent of all the tribes to their living upon it."

"Tecumseh said those words, and he says them again."

"Reflect, my brother. There are two reasons why my people can never take your view of the trouble. Neither I nor the great Father at Washington can compel them to do so, if we were so minded, for they and their fathers before them have lived upon these lands for many, many years."

"Because their fathers stole them from the Indians; is the wrong of a thing made right because it is *old?*" was the pertinent question of Tecumseh. Harrison saw that he must take another tack.

"As I view it, you do not look at the dispute in the right way."

"What is the right way?"

"I will illustrate: you and your people live upon these hunting-grounds, where it has been the law for a good many years that the white man shall not take a foot of land without paying your warriors

therefor. That has been done, but, according to your view, we must secure the consent not only of the Shawanoes, Wyandots, Pottawatomies, and Delawares, but of *all* the tribes, like the Creeks, Choctaws, and Iroquois, whose hunting-grounds are hundreds of miles distant from yours."

"By following that path the white man will meet with no thorns and briars, because it is the true one which the Great Spirit commands him to follow."

General Harrison had determined to keep his temper, but he was impatient, for he knew the mental ability of his companion, and could not help believing he was wilful in his opposition.

"Some of our people are living by the Great Lakes, where the Ottawas have their homes; they have bought their lands from them; do you insist that those white people ought to send representatives here to obtain the consent of *your* people before keeping their lands and dwellings?"

"Those are the words of Tecumseh."

"Suppose your people took it into their heads to refuse?"

"Then the white people should give up the land. All this country once belonged to the red men; they roamed over it between the two great oceans; the pale faces came in their ships and landed on our shores without asking permission of those who owned the land; instead, they shot and killed the

red men, when, if they had treated them as brothers, the red men would have been brothers always to them."

"The words of Tecumseh are true; the white people who came here many moons ago did evil; I am sorry, but what has been done cannot be helped; I cannot act for them nor undo the evil deeds of my ancestors."

"But my brother can help undo the evil deeds of his friends."

"I am the servant of the great Father at Washington; I must obey his will."

"Must my brother obey it if it is evil?"

"I do not admit that it is evil; we are taught to love our country, and to give up our lives in its defence."

"And that is the law which Tecumseh teaches *his* people, but he is right, and his white brother is wrong."

General Harrison saw that it was a waste of time to argue the question that had been argued more than once before. Tecumseh had held for years the views that he expressed, and no one could change them. The General knew it when he asked for this interview, and his words were meant to introduce that which followed. He spoke with great impressiveness:

"It looks as if my people will soon go to war

with the Englishmen from across the ocean; they will come over here to fight us; they will meet on the hunting-grounds of the red men, who must take part with one side or the other. I hope that the great Tecumseh and his brave warriors will fight on the side of the Americans, and not on that of the English."

"It rests with the Americans," was the quiet response.

"We shall treat the red men right——"

"My brother has refused to do so."

"How can the Englishmen treat the Indians better?"

"They will give us our land; they are a powerful people; the red men alone cannot drive away the Americans, but with the help of the English they can."

"The English tried to do that when you and I were small children, but they failed."

"Because they had not the Indians to give them help, as they will now."

"The Indians did a good deal for them, but there were fewer Americans then than there are to-day."

"And so," said Tecumseh, significantly, "there must have been fewer Englishmen in the days of which my brother speaks, for the Great Spirit does not allow some of his children to grow while others fade away. There are more Indians now, and,"

added the chieftain, earnestly, "*all* of them will fight against the Americans."

"Very likely, but it will be because Tecumseh persuades them by the might of his eloquence to do so."

"Tecumseh will do all he can to rally the warriors of every tribe."

"Well," said General Harrison, straightening up from his half-reclining position, as if about to bring the interview to an end, "you and I will soon be arrayed against each other; it is idle for us to talk, for we can never agree in our views, but, Tecumseh, you have not forgotten the promise you once made me?"

The chief looked fixedly at him.

"Tecumseh never forgets or breaks a promise, but he has made many."

"I allude to your pledge that you will not allow any of our people who may fall into your hands to be tortured, nor use any cruelty toward our women and children."

The chieftain had risen to his feet and drew himself up haughtily.

"Tecumseh *never* tortured a prisoner nor treated a woman with disrespect; since the setting of yonder sun, he has set free two children that the Indians were about to tie to the tree and burn to death. The wishes of Tecumseh are known, and

should he find that any warrior has dared to violate them, Tecumseh will kill him!"

General Harrison impulsively extended his hand.

"Would that all your people were as high-minded as you! Tecumseh, I respect and admire you; should it fall to my lot during the war that is near to become a prisoner, I ask no better fate than that you shall be my captor. Should the fortunes of war turn against you, as they surely will, remember that the one friend who will stand by you to the death is—myself. Good-by, my enemy and yet my friend."

CHAPTER V.

THE WORK OF A GENIUS.

THE threat which Tecumseh made to General Harrison was no idle one. He foresaw as clearly as the Governor that a great war was impending between England and the American colonies, and that of necessity it must involve his own race. It was not unreasonable on his part to believe that the Indians would hold the "balance of power," and that whichever side secured their aid would win.

This remarkable man had proven in previous conversations with General Harrison, for whom he felt an undisguised liking, that he was familiar with the leading facts in the history of the United States as well as of his own people. When the Governor spoke of the victory of the young struggling nation in its war for independence, Tecumseh reminded him that it took seven years to gain that victory, and that it would not have been gained at all but for the help of France, whose sons were as numerous and brave as those of England. France would not come to the help of the Americans the next time, and the

Shawanoe, with some contempt of manner, expressed the belief that England would vanquish the Americans, who were so fond of boasting of their prowess: with the help of the Indians they could not fail to do so, especially if all the tribes in the West united to help the English.

Tecumseh was sagacious. The legends of King Philip and of Pontiac had come down to him. Philip would have succeeded, as he viewed it, had he been able to unite the New England tribes against the white settlers, but he failed to effect such union, some of the most powerful remaining outside of the confederation.

The same lack of ability to organize manifested itself in the case of Pontiac. He brought many of the tribes together and captured a number of posts, but some of his most ardent supporters fell away from him, while still pressing the siege of Detroit. To ensure success, therefore, Tecumseh felt he must win all of the leading tribes.

It was only one of the many proofs of the greatness of this Shawanoe leader, that he first made overtures to the Americans. He and his people felt a natural hatred of our fathers because they were the actual occupants of the hunting-grounds over which the dispute occurred. Naturally, they longed to oust them, even if the English became their successors. And yet it would be preferable to

allow the Americans to remain and to preserve peace with them. Governor Harrison would have been happy to preserve such peace, but it has been shown that the task was impossible, since the only terms proposed by Tecumseh were inadmissible.

And now Tecumseh the Shawanoe performed a task the equal of which has rarely or never been seen, and which was one of the most marvellous triumphs of genius recorded in history. He set out to win all the Western and some of the Southern tribes to his help in combating the Americans. From tribe to tribe he hurried, and, calling the chiefs together, addressed them in burning sentences that were resistless. No one was able to withstand his eloquence, which swept the most stolid of listeners off their feet. He had to encounter not only indifference, but pronounced opposition, but he conquered in every case. It is a historical fact that not once did he fail to carry his listeners with him, and we repeat that the magnificent achievement has never been surpassed.

We remember a talk years ago with an aged physician of St. Louis, who was an old friend of Tecumseh. He said that never before nor since had he heard so wonderful a voice. It was not only musical, but had a peculiar resonance which seemed to fill and vibrate through the air. He compared it to the reverberations heard when one

thrusts his head into a hogshead and shouts in his loudest tones.

Still more extraordinary is another fact which rests upon good authority. Tecumseh was dissatisfied with the coldness of the Creeks. He won them over, but lost patience because of the time required. Finally he called out:

"When I get back home I will stamp the ground and it shall shake."

The superstitious Indians were awed by this threat, which doubtless had considerable to do with making allies of them. Having accomplished his mission, Tecumseh set out to rejoin his own people. The Creeks knew the time it would take him to make the journey, and on the very day fixed for his arrival the West was rocked by the most notable earthquake in its history, that of 1811, the cause of the "New Madrid claims," on account of the sunken lands, for whose owners Congress made provision.

When the Creeks felt the ground swaying under their feet and saw their frail lodges tumbling about their ears, they ran outside in terror, shouting:

"Tecumseh has got home! Tecumseh has got home!"

Before starting on his journey, the chieftain completed his organization of the tribes at home. The Prophet gave him much help in this, for he was

looked upon with great consideration and awe, on account of his pretensions to supernatural powers. He was left as the representative of his brother, who forbade him to make any important movement during his absence. The Prophet's mission was to pass from town to town, and by his mummeries keep the various tribes keyed to the proper pitch, so that they would be ready to rush to battle "as to a festival," when the command was given by Tecumseh himself.

But The Prophet, like many a man before and since, made a mistake. Noting the eagerness of the different warriors, he was certain that he had but to sound the tocsin to overwhelm the Americans. Continual skirmishing was going on; the Indians attacked exposed settlements, flatboats, and even blockhouses, though no important movement had taken place, when the news reached the tribes that General Harrison, at the head of a strong force, was marching into the country with the intention of punishing the Indians for the many outrages they had committed.

These rumors were based upon fact. Harrison saw that to dally longer would be accepted as evidence of timidity and weakness by the savages, and encourage them in their raids. He knew the work Tecumseh was doing, and knew too that the only way to checkmate him was by striking an effective

blow before the Shawanoe could bring the different tribes together into a compact organization.

Harrison had no more than fairly entered the Indian country on his way to the region near the headwaters of the Wabash, when the woods seemed literally to swarm with warriors, who appeared to leap from the ground. They were on the alert for an opening through which to attack him, and had he relaxed his vigilance for a single hour his command would have suffered massacre, like the expeditions of Crawford and St. Clair, twenty years or more before.

But the advance of Harrison was similar to that of General Wayne in 1794. He kept his scouts out, went into camp every day before dusk, never neglected to fortify his position, and, in short, adopted every precaution that would occur to a soldier who was a master of Indian warfare.

The Prophet grew uneasy over this advance. If it continued, it was sure to bring much harm to his people. Naturally his first attempt to turn it back was by diplomacy, which is generally another name for deceit and treachery. The leading chiefs who called upon General Harrison insisted that they were the friends of the white men—that it was evil red men who had done the bad things that had reached the ears of their great and good brother, and they hoped he would not frighten their women and chil-

dren by penetrating farther into their country. But whether he did or not, they wished him to know that they were the friends of himself and soldiers, and nothing could induce them to harm a hair of their heads.

The General listened to these avowals, which were the most earnest when he was near Tippecanoe, and gave orders for his men to sleep that night on their arms. He knew what was likely to follow such fervent declarations, and did not mean to be caught unprepared.

Long before it was light, on that chilly morning in November, 1811, the Indians fell upon the American force with irrestrainable fury. So fierce indeed was their attack that at first the soldiers were forced back; but they were not only under the leadership of brave and skilled officers, but they knew the stake for which they were fighting, and after inflicting great loss upon their assailants and suffering severely themselves, they scattered the Indians like sc much chaff in a gale.

While this battle was raging, The Prophet stood on a hill near by, going through his incantations, and shouting that it was impossible for his warriors to be defeated. Even when everything got askew and the warriors were falling like tenpins, he danced and shrieked for them to hold their ground, for the Great Spirit would soon give them the victory.

When The Prophet had to take to flight to save his own bacon, he must have felt some doubt about his ability as an organizer of success.

It may be noted that it was this triumph which made William Henry Harrison President of the United States, some thirty years later, and gave him a name by which he will always be remembered by his admiring countrymen.

It will be recalled that Tecumseh was absent when the battle of Tippecanoe took place, and but for his absence it could not have occurred. When he reached home, and learned how his commands had been disregarded by his brother, his rage passed all bounds. His first impulse was to slay him, but he changed his mind. The Prophet was already in disgrace among his countrymen, and was never able fully to regain the ground he had lost. When Tecumseh caught sight of him, he seized him by his long hair and shook his head until it seemed as if the miserable wretch's teeth would fly out. As for Tecumseh himself, he saw that the irrevocable step had been taken, and he plunged without reservation into the war which was declared between Great Britain and the colonies in the following June.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOME IN THE FOREST.

GEORGE HARDIN and Ben Mayberry had every cause to congratulate themselves and to be thankful for their rescue from the Shawanoes, when they were on the point of beginning preparations for subjecting their prisoners to torture. Under Heaven they owed their lives to Tecumseh, who, history records, interfered in more than one similar case.

It was impossible for a time for the youths to realize the amazing change of situation. When directed to leave by the chieftain, they did so with a promptness that could not have been improved. It was hard indeed to keep from breaking into a run, and giving expression to their feelings by shouts, but they were trained in the school of self-restraint, and contented themselves with silently grasping hands, as they hastened through the forest side by side. Not until they felt themselves fairly safe did they slacken their pace and venture to speak.

"George," said the young Kentuckian, "I 've

sometimes had my doubts about Tecumseh being a genuine Indian."

"Why?"

"He does n't act like one; what was his reason for setting us free?"

"I suppose it was because of pity for us."

"I shall never cease to feel grateful to him, but I wish he had n't half spoiled it by the insult he added."

His companion looked at him in surprise.

"I don't understand you."

"Don't you remember he called us children, and told us we had no business to be abroad in the woods when the Indians were on the war-path?"

"That *was* rather rough; I wonder whether he would have befriended us if we had been half a head taller and a few years older?"

"I think he would; Simon Kenton says Tecumseh acts like a white man when fighting; he might have kept us prisoners, but so long as he was around, he would n't have let any of his warriors hurt us. Take him all in all, he 's a pretty good sort of a fellow."

"We must n't forget another thing; he gave us to understand that if we did n't take his advice and keep out of danger, he would n't befriend us again. What do you think would happen if we fell into his hands once more?"

The boys were thoughtful for a few minutes as they walked forward, and it was Ben Mayberry who spoke:

"Don't forget that we have to pass by our home to reach the blockhouse, and I am bound to have a look at the cabin."

"It can't be very far away."

"We are in the path," said Ben, nodding his head with a glance at the ground; "you have been over the trail often enough to remember it."

"I do, but this flurry with the Shawanoes has muddled my brain; it seems like a dream to me. I tell you, Ben, there was n't a particle of hope left in me; I had figured it all over in my mind and could n't catch the first glimmer. There must have been more than two hundred warriors, all painted, armed, and eager to fight; there are not a fifth as many of our friends at the blockhouse, and if they had all hurried through the woods, they could n't have rescued us."

"And if there had been five hundred of them, they could n't have got to the place, even if they had known what a scrape we were in, in time to help. But what 's the use of talking or thinking about it?"

"I can't help it."

"You can help talking; wait till you get home, and then when your father begins to spin his yarns, why you can strike in with yours."

The foot-path compelled the boys to travel as they had been doing most of the time—that is, with Ben in advance. In many places the branches so overhung the trail that they were obliged to shove them aside or duck their heads to keep the limbs from catching them under their chins and almost lifting them off their feet.

Although neither referred to it, there was one misgiving in the minds of each of the lads. It had been established that no warrior, no matter what his tribe, dared offer indignity to a prisoner in the presence of Tecumseh, but what was to hinder one or two or more of them from stealing away from the clearing, without its being noticed by the chieftain, and, following the couple until at a safe distance, shoot them down? True, there might be risk in such a deed, and the guilty ones would fare ill if the truth ever came to the ears of the terrible Shawanoe.

Furthermore, the experience of George and Ben had impressed the significant truth upon them that in those days there were perils on every hand, from the side, and the front, as well as the rear. Accordingly, while Ben peered ahead and listened, George continually glanced behind him, and both exercised all the vigilance of which they were capable. Occasionally, the Kentuckian paused in his advance, and his comrade instantly did the same,

while each listened until certain there was no cause for alarm, when they resumed their course with the same care as before. It would seem as if the late mishap could not be repeated with them.

Moving forward in this cautious manner, the young friends reached the home of Ben Mayberry. The distinctly marked path over which they were making their way ended in a clearing, nearly two acres in extent, in the middle of which stood the log cabin that had been erected by the pioneer, James Mayberry, some three or four years before. It was one of those substantial structures of logs, dovetailed at the corners, and built more for strength and comfort than for appearance. The lower floor consisted of two rooms, while the half-floor above was reached by means of a sloping ladder at one corner. One of the upper rooms was occupied as a sleeping apartment by his parents, while the other belonged to the son, who was an only child. The larger apartment on the lower floor was the living-room, the smaller one adjoining being available for sleeping quarters for visitors, of whom there were more than would be supposed, where the white population was so sparse. The latch-string was always out, and no visitor ever applied at those early homes who was not made welcome.

There was but the single door downstairs, fronting the path over which the lads were approaching

when they first caught sight of the structure. On either side of the door was a window, with a single one at the rear, all so narrow that a small boy could not have forced his body through. Instead of glass panes, oiled paper, as in the colonial times, admitted the light. In case of attack, the occupants could use these openings for loopholes, and there were few pioneer homes in which they had not served such a purpose. Twice during James Mayberry's residence in his primitive dwelling he had beaten off a small party of Indians who sought to catch him unawares.

A few rods from the house was another log structure, which served as a barn, and sheltered the single cow and horse at night, or when the storm raged. These were the only domestic animals belonging to the place, but a number of fowls were scratching the soil, hunting as industriously for food as if nothing had occurred to interrupt the usual order of things. When the owner set out for the blockhouse with his wife, he took the horse and cow with him, so that the chickens were all the signs of life that greeted the youths as they silently emerged from the forest and paused with wondering curiosity, uncertain whether to approach nearer without first reconnoitring the dwelling.

The sturdy pioneer had cleared the area of land, upon which he had planted Indian corn, potatoes,

and other garden vegetables. The fertile soil answered his efforts with a bountiful crop, part of which was stowed in the barn and a portion within the house itself. It was so late in the season that all of the harvest had been gathered, with the exception of several rows of corn that were left standing, though the ears had been plucked from most of them. These were brown and dried, and it cannot be said that they contributed any beauty to the scene.

It had been the plan of Mayberry to add continually to his area of cleared land. From most of it the stumps had been torn away, but at the farther end a number of the unsightly objects remained, for he had not completed the work when compelled to abandon it by the sudden appearance of danger. If undisturbed, the task would be finished when he returned, in time for the additional culture during the coming spring.

It was hard in looking upon this scene, with scarcely an appearance of life, to believe that anything in the nature of personal danger impended. There was no sign of disturbance, nor any evidence that hostile visitors had been near since the departure of the youth that morning to meet his friend. So far as could be seen, neither of the buildings had suffered harm. In truth, the indications were that the advance before which the husband and wife fled had not yet been made. The Shawanoes were

likely to come at any moment, but it looked as if they had failed as yet to put in an appearance.

Such would have been the conclusion of the two youths, who halted on the edge of the clearing, taking care to stand far enough back among the trees to escape being seen by any prowlers who might be within on the watch, except for a single discovery that was made by both at the same moment: the door of the cabin, instead of being closed, was partly open.

It may seem strange that this should have caused any misgiving, and, but for the son's familiarity with the habits of his father, he would have attached no importance to it, but he spoke the truth when he said:

"Father would have left the latch-string out, for he would have to do it, so as to get in himself or allow me to get in, but he never would have left the door open."

"You know he and your mother went away in great haste," suggested Hardin, with little faith in his own explanation.

"He could n't have left in such haste as to forget to latch the door."

"What, then, do you make of it?"

"The Indians have been there."

"But would they have gone away without destroying the cabin?"

"We don't know that they have gone away—*hark!*"

Each instinctively sheltered himself behind the trunk of the nearest tree, and, with their eyes fixed on the front of the cabin, intently listened. Ben had not heard anything to alarm him, but he expected to hear it in the course of a few minutes. The silence, however, remained unbroken, though very soon they observed something that deepened their misgivings. Ben whispered:

"*The door moved!*"

"I saw it; it was drawn back a few inches; would it do that of itself?"

"It might, for I have known it to swing when left partly open, but I believe some one moved it just now. I tell you, George, there are Indians in there!"

"It looks that way, and it makes our position ticklish; is it best for us to stay here?"

"It may not be wise, but I don't know of any safer place just now. They are not expecting us, and are not on the watch; we are so far back among the trees that they can't see us when they come out the door."

"Unless they come toward us."

"That need make no difference, for, if they do that, they 'll stick to the path, and these trees will screen us. I don't want to leave this spot till I

know whether any Shawanoes are in there, and if so what they are doing."

The feeling was natural on the part of the young Kentuckian, who was also actuated by a weak hope that perhaps he might do something to save his home from destruction, though how that was possible was more than he would have been able to explain had his companion asked for enlightenment. Hardin could not refuse to bear him company, though it was the second time that day that his comrade had done a thing whose wisdom he condemned. Standing erect, therefore, with their bodies carefully screened behind the massive tree trunks, they scarcely removed their eyes from the puncheon door, through which, if any enlightenment appeared, it must present itself.

And while standing in this attitude of close attention, with their gaze centred on the door, a variation of opinion suddenly arose between them.

"Sh! did you see that?" whispered Ben, excitedly.

"See what?" asked his companion.

"The head of that warrior."

"I saw nothing of him, and don't think you did."

"I *know* I did; he peeped around the edge of the door and then drew back his head."

"I had my eyes on the door, and would have seen him had he done anything like that."

"I *know* I saw him," was the emphatic remark of the Kentuckian.

But Hardin was not convinced. He believed that the agitation of his friend had made his imagination deceive him. He asked the pertinent question:

"Why should a Shawanoe act that way? If he wanted to look out, he would look out without trying to prevent any one seeing him."

"You talk as if you did not believe any Indians were in the house."

"I don't."

"Hold on a bit, and we shall know of a certainty."

Ben was right, for within less than five minutes he whispered more excitedly than before:

"What do you say to *that?*"

"You are right, Ben! The Indians *are* there sure enough!"

CHAPTER VII.

STIRRING WORK.

WHILE the two boys were gazing upon the partly open door, it was drawn farther inward and a Shawanoe warrior in his war-paint stepped forth. He was immediately followed by a second and third, each holding a long rifle in his hand, with the usual knife and tomahawk at his girdle.

The first thought of the youths was that the three Indians had started to enter the path directly in front of the place where the couple were hiding themselves from view; but the leader had taken only two or three steps, when he changed the course he was following, and took the opposite direction by walking alongside the cabin and across the clearing toward the wood beyond.

The action of the red men was singular from the first. They came out as stealthily as so many boys in fear of being detected in mischief, and walked in perfect silence until close to the primitive barn which has already been referred to. There the leader paused, and, turning his head, talked for a

minute or two with his companions. Evidently the barn was the subject of the discussion, and doubtless the conclusion of the boys was right: they were considering the question of setting fire to it. If so, they decided in the negative, for they resumed their approach to the wood without any further turning aside.

"Let 's keep an eye on them," whispered Ben, cautiously shifting his position and stealing in the direction taken by the warriors, from whom he took care to screen himself. Hardin imitated him, though the action was dangerous for both, but before they had passed beyond sight of the front of the cabin, Hardin exclaimed:

"Gracious, Ben! They have set fire to your house!"

The cause of this exclamation was the sight of thick blue smoke issuing from the front door.

"Sure enough! I 'll try to put it out; keep watch and signal to me if there is any danger from them."

And before Hardin could protest, the young Kentuckian bounded silently out from among the trees and ran toward the front door. A few paces enabled him to intrude the cabin between himself and the Shawanoes, who, as a consequence, could see nothing of him if they looked around.

George held his place until he observed his friend disappear hurriedly through the door, when he care-

fully advanced under cover of the wood, along the side of the clearing, intending to follow the Shawanoes for a short distance, though why he should do so or what was to be gained by such a course it was impossible to say.

Taught to think quickly under all circumstances, Hardin had gone but a little way when he stopped, convinced that this was the true thing to do.

"If they started a fire inside the house, they will not leave till they are sure it is going to be burned down."

The good sense of this decision was proven almost in the moment that it took shape in the mind of the youth. From where he stood, the three Shawanoes were in plain sight, with their backs toward him, as they walked in Indian file in the direction of the wood on the farther side of the clearing, but at the moment when they should have disappeared, all three paused as if in obedience to a military command and faced around. Had they done this a brief while before, they must have detected Ben Mayberry making for the front of the cabin.

"They mean to make certain that the fire will do its work."

The incendiaries would have been authorized in believing this delay unnecessary on their part, for the smoke now plainly showed above the sloping

roof of slabs, where it was only slightly dissolved in the clear autumn air. Beyond question, a fire was burning below the roof, which ought soon to burst into flame.

But the young Kentuckian was vigorously attending to business. The instant he pushed back the door and stepped across the threshold, he saw what had been done. The stone chimney of his home passed above the roof on the outside of the building, the broad hearth below occupying almost the entire side of the lower room. The smouldering embers left among the ashes had been raked into the middle of the floor, some loose sticks piled on top, while the few split-bottom chairs and stools were heaped in turn upon them. Thus fed, the blaze was burning strongly and with increasing strength. If not interfered with, nothing could save the building.

But Ben Mayberry's visit was for the purpose of such interference. One kick sent the brands flying in every direction, but as they continued blazing there was still danger from them. Catching up one of the partially burned stools, he used it as a broom with which to sweep the rest into the fireplace, where they could burn themselves out without doing damage.

So far everything had gone well. The house was saved for the time, but the same question presented itself to him that engaged the thought of George

Hardin: would the Shawanoes leave the neighborhood until assured of the thoroughness of their work?

However, there was nothing more for him to do, and he therefore did the most indiscreet thing imaginable.

Emerging from the front door, he began walking rapidly across the clearing toward the spot where he had parted from his companion, whereas, had he continued in a straight line, so as to keep the cabin between him and his enemies, nothing amiss could have taken place; but he walked directly into the field of vision of the Shawanoes, who, it will be remembered, had halted and were looking back to watch the progress of the miniature conflagration.

Hardin did not observe the imprudent act of his friend until too late, for his attention was fixed upon the warriors. Thus it came about that the Shawanoes, to their utter amazement, while surveying the log structure saw a sturdy youth emerge into view from behind it, and stride toward the edge of the forest just as he must have done many times in the past when no peril impended over his house.

Hardin observed him at the same moment and called out:

"Look out, Ben! The Indians see you!"

The Kentuckian glanced in the direction whence

the Shawanoes had disappeared, and observed that the whole three, with that instant action which is a part of their training, were coming toward him on a loping trot. They had emitted no cry, but must have looked upon this easy capture of the youth as among the immediate certainties. Singular as it may seem, they gave no evidence of having heard the warning call of Hardin, which was so carefully guarded that it barely caught the ears of the one for whom it was intended.

George's expectation was that his comrade would break into a run and join him without delay, but, to his astonishment, he turned about and made a dash for the front of the cabin. Instead of passing through the door, however, he put into execution an exploit that would have done credit to Simon Kenton or Daniel Boone himself.

He was able to tell to a second when his enemies would appear in front of the house, and he had plenty of time in which to fasten the door against them. Instead, however, of darting inside, he stopped on the threshold, drew the latch-string through the orifice, so that the latch could not be lifted from without, and then pulled the door shut. Thus the cabin was locked and both boys were on the outside.

Calculating with the coolness of a veteran the time of the approach of the dusky trio, Ben May-

berry stepped softly around the farther corner of the front of the building. It will be perceived that his aim was to give the impression to the Indians that he had entered the cabin to make a stand against them, whereas he was elsewhere. The cleverness of this stratagem could not have been surpassed, and more than compensated for his mistaken woodcraft earlier in the day.

George Hardin could hardly repress an exclamation of pleasure when he comprehended what had been done, and saw his companion slip from sight a moment before the three trotting Shawanoes came around the other corner of the cabin. They were completely deceived by the inimitable trick.

But the miscreants could not be ignorant of one fact: a Kentuckian, even if a boy, will fight, and it was idle to waste time in summoning the youth supposed to be inside to surrender. The action of the warriors showed that they half-expected a shot through one of the narrow windows, for they dodged close to the front of the cabin and to one side where they were out of range, the thickness of the walls preventing a defender from deflecting his rifle sufficiently for a good aim.

Perhaps after all the lone youth might be convinced of his helplessness and induced to surrender. It looked as if one of the warriors held that view, for with his figure bent almost double, he sneaked

along the front of the cabin, until he stood before the door. Then he straightened up, and, drawing his knife, struck the handle against the heavy planking with a resounding whack that could be heard beyond the clearing.

"Howdy, brudder? Me friend—lemme come in—no hurt!"

This summons was repeated several times, when the caller bent his head to listen, but it is hardly necessary to say that he received no response. He called to the fellow again, but soon gave it up as useless. Then he placed his back against the heavy door, spread his moccasins apart and pushed with might and main. The doors of our ancestors were not constructed to be carried easily off their hinges, and it was impossible to perceive that the fellow made any impression.

Then the Shawanoe spoke angrily to his companions, who were grinning at his failure, and they joined in the effort to force the door inward, but had there been room for half a dozen more to help, the massive structure would have withstood their efforts.

Their resources were not exhausted by any means. The warrior who had acted the part of leader whipped out his tomahawk, and began chopping into the middle of the planking. This if continued long would make an opening, though it was no

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small task to effect an entrance large enough to permit the passage of their bodies.

But the savage must have comprehended the dangerous nature of the task he had set for himself. The glimpse of the youthful Kentuckian showed that he had carried a rifle in his hand, and, standing in the middle of the large lower room, nothing would be easier than for him to shoot the first foe that came within range, without the slightest exposure of himself.

It therefore came about that before the self-appointed task was half-completed, the Shawanoes stopped for consultation. The result was the conclusion that they had made a mistake. Perhaps one or more of them had participated in a former attack upon the cabin that had been repulsed by the owner. They agreed that the better course for them was to wait on the outside until the youth was driven to terms or until they could bring a force that would leave him no choice.

It was natural for the Shawanoes to believe that the lad had extinguished the fire, so that nothing was to be feared from that, but they could apply the torch from without and speedily reduce the cabin to ashes. There were no windows at the end of the building, and the single straight one at the rear was ineffective against such a calamity. Abundance of fuel could be collected, and since the In-

dians had long since learned the use of flint and steel, it would be easy to fire it.

Every movement indicated that the plan outlined had been agreed upon, for the three left the front of the building, and, moving to the smaller structure referred to, began tearing it apart with the purpose of using the timbers for the blaze that was to lay the cabin low. The work was hardly begun when the sharp crack of a rifle resounded from among the trees near where the youths had parted company, and the leading Shawanoe, with a screech, leaped in the air, with his arms flung aloft, and sprawled on his face with not a particle of life left in his body.

The startling occurrence convinced the other two that a party of whites had arrived on the scene, and, without pausing to learn the particulars, the Indians made a dash for the protection of the wood. Before they could reach it, another report came from the other side of the cabin, and a second warrior emitted a rasping shriek, accompanied by an involuntary leap from the ground, but though hit hard, he did not fall and continued his flight at the heels of his companion, both whisking from sight the next minute.

Ben Mayberry came into view around a corner of the cabin, his face flushed with excitement. He was looking for his friend, who cautiously signalled,

so as to direct him to the right spot. Immediately after, they came together on the margin of the wood.

"Gracious, George!" he exclaimed, "I did n't know you were going to take a shot at them; you aimed better than I, for I was flurried, and did n't take enough pains. Was n't it rather risky, old fellow?"

"I did n't shoot that Indian," was the answer.

"And, as Hardin spoke, he held the stock of his flint-lock toward his friend, so that he could see the powder still clasped in the pan, showing that it had not been discharged, for he had not had sufficient time in which to reload.

"Well, well," added the astonished Kentuckian, "who was it?" and both looked around in quest of their unknown friend. Nothing could be seen or heard that threw any light on the surprising occurrence.

"He can't be far off," whispered Hardin; "it may be that he has started in pursuit of the Shawanoes."

"He would n't do that if he were alone; there may have been several of them."

"Hardly; for if there had been, they would n't have allowed the other two to get away."

"If there is but the single person, and he is chasing the Shawanoes, we shall hear his gun before long——"

As if in response to the thought, the clear report of a rifle rang through the woods at that moment, though the direction was somewhat to the left of the line of flight taken by the two Shawanoes—a fact which signifies nothing, since it was not likely that they had followed a direct course.

"We shall learn who he is one of these days," said Ben.

"It could n't have been your father?"

The other shook his head.

"If it had been he, he would have shown himself before this, and he would n't have started on a chase after the others—what 's the matter?"

Hardin was looking fixedly at the body of the warrior that had fallen by the rifle of their unknown friend. His face was turned toward them, though he lay upon his side. Something familiar attracted the attention of the youth, who without answering, walked across the open space to where the inanimate figure lay. He bent partly down and scrutinized it for a moment.

"I thought so," he remarked, straightening up.

"Thought what?"

"Do you remember that Shawanoe who struck you such a fearful clip alongside the head just after they took us prisoners?"

"Remember him! I should think I did; I feel that blow yet."

"Well, that 's what 's left of him."

It seemed unlikely, but when the Kentuckian had studied the features for a moment he knew his comrade was right. It may have sounded harsh, and yet his training and natural feelings prompted the words:

"I can't say that I am sorry for him; I can say that I am glad; it was a cowardly blow, and I felt like killing him for it, but the trouble has been saved me."

"But, Ben, how in the name of common sense did he get here ahead of us?"

"It must have been by travelling faster, I suppose."

"The path 's almost a direct line, and we did n't lose any time in coming over it."

The question was rather puzzling, but it is probable that the explanation agreed upon by the boys was the true one. When they were delivered over to the Shawanoes at the large clearing, the three either foresaw or quickly read the course of Tecumseh with regard to the captives. They did not dare to offer injury to the lads, but the party withdrew without attracting notice, and, hurrying through the wood, attacked the house of James Mayberry. Finding him and his wife gone, they made their preparations for burning the building, and were thus engaged when the boys came upon the scene.

Whether the trio would have attacked the latter, had they not interfered, cannot be determined, though the presumption is that they would have done so, relying upon some explanation that would satisfy Tecumseh, should he learn of the occurrence and call them to account. Everything however, thus far had turned out for the best, and the boys could not but feel grateful for the favoring care of heaven which had been extended over them in so remarkable a manner.

The fact that the exposed cabin had received a visit from the hostiles was proof of the danger to which it was constantly exposed, and indicated that the visit was likely to be repeated. For the boys to remain longer was to invite disaster, and they agreed that their duty was to make their way to the blockhouse without a minute's unnecessary delay. The trail thither was plainly marked, though for that very reason, it would be perilous for them to keep to it, since it was likely to be under surveillance by some of the Shawanoes.

The young friends were on the point of setting out, when, to their astonishment, a man stepped silently from the wood and walked toward them. He was tall, finely formed, and attired in the border costume of the American scouts, which closely resembled that of the Indians themselves, and was not without its suggestion of the dress in which the boys were attired. His long hunting knife was

carried suspended over his left breast, where it could be more readily snatched from position than if in the girdle at his waist. He did not look to be more than thirty-five or forty years of age, though in truth he was not far from three-score. His smooth, clean-shaven countenance was pleasant and firm of expression, his hair sandy in color, while his keen eyes were of as deep blue as the vault of the heavens overhead.

"It is Simon Kenton!" was the delighted exclamation of George Hardin the moment that he caught sight of the famous pioneer and scout, who came smilingly forward and shook each by the hand.

"Younkers, this is n't the place for you," was his remark; "I came from the blockhouse 'cause Jim Mayberry asked me to do so, on account of his worrying over both of you."

"We were just about to start for the post," said Ben.

"What made you stop here?"

"I wanted to find out how things stood."

"I reckon you found out," was the grim remark of Kenton; "matters might have gone bad, if I had n't come to mix up things for you; but times are going to be lively in these parts purty soon; let 's be off."

And within the following hour the three safely reached the frontier blockhouse.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1813.

THERE are a great many things of which we Americans are justified in feeling proud, but it would be strange if, in recalling the past, there were not incidents that awake opposite emotions. No more glorious record was ever made by any nation than that of our navy in the War of 1812, but, on the other hand, the early land operations were anything but creditable.

One of the favorite methods of conducting a war with Great Britain during our struggle for independence, and again a generation later, was by an invasion of Canada, and yet in nearly every instance such invasion resulted in disaster. The first act of General William Hull was to cross over from Detroit and prepare to attack Fort Malden. While thus engaged, he learned that the enemy was gathering in large numbers, whereupon he retreated to Detroit. There, in August, 1812, although he had a brave and numerous force, he made a cowardly surrender not only of Detroit, with its garrison and stores, but the whole of Michigan.

Two months later the attempt to invade Canada was repeated. A severe battle was fought at Queenstown Heights, when our countrymen being hard pressed, their commander returned to the American shore to secure the aid of the New York militia. The latter refused to go outside of the State, and stood on the bank of the Niagara River and saw their brave comrades compelled to surrender.

Three armies were raised in 1813, all of which were intended ultimately to invade Canada. Two of these, the Army of the Centre and the Army of the North, accomplished nothing. The third was the Army of the West, commanded by General Harrison, who proved that the laurels of Tippecanoe were well earned. The British general was Henry Proctor, while Tecumseh had charge of the Indian allies, and was commissioned brigadier-general He proved himself in every respect the superior of the Englishman.

The task of General Harrison was to recover Michigan. He sent General Winchester to Frenchtown, on the River Raisin twenty odd miles to the south of Detroit. The British surprised and defeated the men, capturing Winchester. The force of the enemy was much the larger, and was commanded by Proctor and Tecumseh. Fearing the advance of Harrison from Lower Sandusky, Proctor hurried toward Malden. Harrison built Fort Meigs,

near where the present town of Perrysburg stands, placed a strong garrison in it, and made it a depot in which to receive supplies and reinforcements from Ohio and Kentucky. Proctor laid siege to the place with a large body of troops, and ordered Harrison to surrender, with the threat that if he refused, all his command would be massacred. A defiant answer was returned, and the attack was repulsed. Proctor, with half his force, withdrew leaving Tecumseh in command.

This brings events down to the midsummer of 1813, when our two young friends once more come upon the stage of action. George Hardin and Ben Mayberry were now eighteen years of age, and they had enlisted in the service of their country. The father of Ben was a captain in a Kentucky regiment, but Colonel Hardin was so severely wounded at Fort Meigs that there was little hope of his taking any further part in fighting for a long time, if indeed he recovered before the close of the war. When he was able to be moved, he was carried to his home in Ohio, where he regained his health and strength in time to take a hand in the closing events of the last campaign.

One of the most useful adjuncts of our armies in the West were the scouts, whose services, it may be said were indispensable. There were many of these men who had been trained in woodcraft from

boyhood, and who were the equals of the Indians themselves. Penetrating far into the hostile territory, they were enabled by their skill to discover in many cases the intentions of their foes, and to give such timely notice to the American officers that important campaigns were affected or decided.

The most famous of these scouts was Simon Kenton, who was among the remarkable characters developed in the early days of the West. His life was a series of thrilling adventures and escapes, with the result that he lived to see the section that had been the scene of his wonderful experiences peaceful, well-settled, and prosperous, while he himself calmly passed away, a meek and humble Christian, more than four-score years of age.

The second siege of Fort Meigs took place while General Harrison was absent in Kentucky in quest of reinforcements, and General Smith was in command. It was not long before the withdrawal of half the force of Proctor was discovered, and General Smith sent for Kenton.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked of the great scout, whose age and experience gave him privileges in the presence of his superior officers that no one else would have dared to claim.

"Gin'ral, it 's hard to say what the plans of Proctor are, for the reason that I don't b'leve he knows 'em himself."

"But he would not depart with half his men, leaving Tecumseh with no one beside his Indians, unless he had good reason for it."

General Smith was seated, while the tall, muscular scout kept his feet, declining the invitation to take a chair. He shrugged his shoulders, in a way common with him, and his broad smile showed a set of teeth that a man of one third of his years would have envied.

"That Shawanoe knows more in a half hour than Proctor does in a month; Tecumseh ought to be in command; I 've an idee that his habit of telling Proctor that he 's a fool, and warning him that if he does n't fight more and better, has had something to do with making the officer leave for some other p'int, where he can do 'casional fighting without having fault found with him."

This explanation might have satisfied the one who made it, but, as a military man, General Smith could not accept it. Proctor as chief officer, may have been angered by the plain spoken comments of the Shawanoe leader, with whom he bore in order to retain the support of him and his allies, but it was not reasonable to suppose he would allow it to interfere with his plan of campaign.

"I have a suspicion, Kenton, that Proctor has set out to attack some post not so well able to defend itself as ours."

"Should n't wonder if you 're right, Gin'ral."

"What place is it likely to be?"

Simon Kenton rested the butt of his long rifle on the rough floor at his feet, and folding his arms over the muzzle, placed his chin upon them, while his blue eyes looked into vacancy. It was his favorite method when engaged with some mental problem, knowing which, General Smith lit his pipe, quietly smoked and watched the seamed countenance, until such time as the scout should speak.

Kenton did not require long to reach a conclusion. Abruptly lifting his chin, he looked at the officer.

"Who has charge of bus'ness at Fort Stephenson?"

"Major George Croghan."

"And a braver chap never lived!" exclaimed Kenton, compressing his thin lips and straightening up; "I 've knowed him since he was a boy, which ain't long ago."

"You speak the truth," was the hearty response of General Smith; "he is hardly twenty-one years old, but we have n't his superior in the regular army."

"How much of a garrison has he?"

"Less than two hundred men."

Kenton emitted a low whistle and shook his head.

"Proctor is aiming for that p'int, you can bet your life, and he 's got two thousand soldiers with him. As I figger out, Gin'ral, that 's 'bout ten to one."

"It 's worse than that, for Major Croghan has barely one hundred and fifty, and Proctor has more than two thousand men."

"Can't you send him reinforcements?"

"Can I do so?" said the officer, throwing back the question; "you are better able to answer that than I. General Harrison is in Kentucky, and will not be back for ten days or a fortnight—so *he* is out of the question. If help reaches Major Croghan, it must come from me. I could spare half my force and still be secure against Tecumseh, but can I get the reinforcements to Croghan?"

Simon Kenton resumed his old attitude with his arms folded across the muzzle of his rifle and his chin resting upon them, but his musing was briefer than before. Straightening up, he spoke slowly, as if addressing himself:

"Fort Meigs where we are is on the Maumee, and Fort Stephenson lays east on the Sandusky; the distance atween the two places is 'bout forty miles, right through the woods—Gin'ral, the thing can't be done."

"Why not?" asked the officer, quite certain in his own mind what the answer would be.

"I 'm 'sprised that you should ask such a foolish question, Gin'ral; 'spose you started a thousand men through the woods for Fort Stephenson, with twice as many Britishes to attack 'em, and three times as many redskins firing from behind the trees and rocks—why, they 'd sarve 'em worse than poor Braddock catched it, when he thought Gin'ral Washington did n't know how to fight Injins."

"There is no questioning the truth of what you say; Major Croghan, under heaven, must rely upon the handful of men he has. He has good intrenchments, even though he has but a single piece of artillery. But Kenton, there is one thing that can be easily done to help the Major."

"What 's that?"

"Send him warning of what to expect, so that he will have time to make every preparation."

The scout removed his coonskin cap and thoughtfully ran his fingers through his sandy hair. He smiled significantly as he asked the question:

"Are there many officers of the reg'lar army that ain't prepared all the time for deviltry?"

"They would be unfit to command if they were not always ready, and yet it is highly important to know the exact nature of the danger that is approaching, for it may be possible to complete certain plans of defence which otherwise could not be used. Kenton, word must be sent to the Major at

once, and you are the one to get there in advance of Proctor."

To the surprise of General Smith, the veteran scout showed a reluctance to assume the duty, though it was of a nature with which he had been familiar for two-score years. It was impossible that fear could have anything to do with his hesitation, for no man who knew Simon Kenton ever accused him of that. It was rare for the famous scout to show embarrassment, but he now did so. His bronzed, leathery face darkened, as if with a blush, and, with a smile, he bluntly remarked:

"I can't do it, Gin'ral."

The officer was nettled to be addressed thus by an inferior, and he showed it when he curtly asked:

"Suppose I order you to do it?"

"I can't go."

"Do you mean that you will refuse to obey me?"

"Wal, Gin'ral, I would n't put it exactly that way."

"You would n't? Pray, tell me how it should be put."

"I 'll explain by adding to what I said that I can't go to Fort Stephenson 'cause I 've got a prev'us engagement."

This statement did not smooth the ruffled feelings of the officer, who felt that he was receiving less

deference than was due him as the commander in the absence of his own superior. General Smith was a martinet and impatient with anything like lack of discipline.

"It is strange language for you to use, sir! You are regularly enrolled as chief scout of the Army of the West, and yet when I call upon you to perform a duty belonging to that position, you coolly tell me you can't obey because of a previous engagement. Kenton, you have no right to have a previous engagement, or to allow anything short of physical incapacity to prevent your prompt obedience."

The smile on the face of the scout grew broader. Something in the situation pleased him.

"Gin'ral," said he, "you say it 's the duty of a private to obey his super'r officer, don't you?"

"I do; no man can question the fact."

"Wal, that 's what I 'm doing."

"I don't understand you."

"I say agin that I 'm obeying the orders of my super'r officer."

General Smith found it hard to restrain his temper.

"Let there be an end to this trifling; I have no patience to listen further to twaddle that would discredit a child."

"Wal, now, Gin'ral, there 's no reason for get-

ting huffy over it; the orders which I 'm obeying wa given to me by Gin'ral William Henry Harrison, afore he started for Kentucky."

General Smith's eyes opened. He had not suspected anything like this. An order from General Harrison was of necessity above anything that he could issue; but the commander of the army was hundreds of miles distant.

" There is no questioning the truth of what you say, Kenton, but you have overlooked one fact: when General Harrison is here, no one dare say him nay; when he turns over his command to me and departs, it is as if he had been killed in battle; I am as supreme as if I were General Harrison himself, here in person, and I remain so until he returns and resumes his office."

" That being so, Gin'ral, I 'll ask you to settle one thing for me. Afore Gin'ral Harrison left he and me had a talk. He told me that Proctor was likely to attack the fort agin, but that you would have no trouble in beating him off; he and me agreed that when Proctor was beat back he would either leave with all his men or with a part of 'em. ' Simon,' said the Gin'ral, ' on the next morning after you larn that Proctor has gone, you must quit the post on that little bus'ness that we 'ranged atween us.' My reply was, ' Gin'ral, if I 'm alive it shall be as you wish.' Wal, this is the morning

after Proctor left; am I to do as the Gin'ral ordered, or shall I start for Fort Stephenson, and when the Gin'ral comes back and asks me for my report, tell him that I have n't got any to make 'cause you had other things for me to do ?"

Simon Kenton grinned more broadly than ever, for the flush on the face of General Smith showed that the last shot had pierced his armor. The scout had justified his refusal to carry out the wishes of his commander, since to do so, would be to violate the orders of his superior officer, even though he was a long distance away.

"It would have been well Kenton, if when I had made known my desire, you had promptly explained that you were bound by previous orders."

"I don't think I talked long afore saying something like that."

"Well, let it go; it is n't worth while to discuss it further; may I ask whether you are at liberty to tell me the nature of the business upon which General Harrison has detailed you ?"

Kenton's face became grave, and he shook his head.

"One of the first things Gin'ral Harrison said to me was that I must n't give a hint of it to any one."

"Enough ; I have no wish to pry into others' secrets; you are at liberty to depart any moment you choose."

The scout turned to leave, but had taken only a single step when he checked himself and turned back.

"Gin'ral, 'cause I can't go to Major Croghan, it 's no sign that we have n't plenty that can."

"That is my view; we must have twenty men almost—I will not say quite—as well qualified to act the scout as yourself. Will you be good enough to send me one of them?"

"Sartainly—but, I 'd like to ask Gin'ral, if you consider it very important that this message of yours should go to Major Croghan?"

"I do, and the more I think it over, the more I am impressed with its urgency; the fact that you cannot go distresses me, through fear that the one whom I send may fail."

"In a bus'ness of this kind, it is n't wise to hang all your hopes onto one man, 'cause if he fails to git through, the jig 's up."

"Then you advise that two should be sent?"

"Three would be better, but two at least."

"You can readily select them?"

"Without any trouble, but I 'll make it three. I 'll send the first to you by himself, and the other tw together after he has gone. You can make your 'rangements with 'em to suit yourself; all of 'em will be glad of the job."

"Who are the scouts?"

"Jim Perkins is the first; he 'll be here inside of ten minutes."

"And the others?"

"You 'll know when they arrive," was the rather pert reply of Kenton, who took his departure the same minute, to engage in one of the most remarkable enterprises connected with the early history of our country—an enterprise that promised to change the whole course of the momentous campaign on foot, the particulars of which must be given in another place.

True to his promise, he sent one of the scouts, Perkins by name, to General Smith for his instructions. He was a younger man than Kenton, but was brave and trustworthy, and had acquitted himself creditably in several delicate and dangerous situations. The fact that Kenton showed confidence in him was the strongest proof of his ability in the difficult work to which he had devoted the best years of his life.

Jim Perkins was the opposite of Kenton, so far as his physical appearance went. He was short and stockily built, and evidently the possessor of immense strength, with the same cat-like quickness of movement which was one of the characteristics of Kenton. His face was covered with a dark, shaggy beard which descended some inches below his chin, and his hair and eyes were as black as midnight.

More polished in manner than Kenton, he made a military salute as he entered the presence of the commander, and acknowledged the invitation to a seat with a courtesy of a gentleman of the old school. He listened with respectful interest, while the officer explained the work he expected at his hands—a task so simple that it required only two or three minutes to make everything clear.

"I am satisfied that an attack will be made upon Major Croghan at Fort Stephenson, which, as you know, is some forty miles away. It is important that he should be apprised of his danger in order to use every possible precaution. You will make your way to him without any unnecessary delay, with the message from me. Nothing in the way of a letter is necessary."

"I 'll be on the road inside of fifteen minutes," replied Perkins, with the quiet, self-confidence which pleases an officer when observed under such circumstances, "but suppose I fail, General?"

"You imply that it is n't wise that this message should depend upon you alone. That is the opinion of Kenton and myself; therefore, two others will be sent upon the same business at the same time."

"I am pleased to know that; *one* of the three ought to get through, and if he does it will be just as good as if all succeeded. If I 'm the lucky one,

I 'll stay and give what help I can to Major Croghan."

"That is my wish; would that I could send fifty or a hundred with you, for I am sure they will be needed."

CHAPTER IX.

TWO YOUNG SCOUTS.

GENERAL SMITH was surprised when, a few minutes after the departure of the scout Perkins, the orderly ushered into his primitive headquarters the other two individuals that were to undertake the task of apprising Major Croghan of his imminent danger of attack by an overwhelming body of British and Indians under General Proctor.

The cause of the officer's surprise was the youthfulness of the persons who expected to be assigned to this important duty. Both were sturdy, manful fellows, whose faces were innocent of beard, though they held out promise of something of the kind at no distant date in the future. Their countenances were attractive, their expression intelligent, their eyes bright, and their whole manner pleasing, while their fine, athletic figures would have commanded the admiration of a professional trainer.

Saluting respectfully, they took seats on the stools indicated, and waited expectantly for the commander to speak.

"What is your name?" he asked, looking into the face of the one nearer to him.

"George Hardin, sir."

"Ah—that is an honored name in Ohio and Kentucky; are you any relative of Colonel Richard Hardin, who is unfortunately out of the service just now, owing to his wounds?"

"I am his only son."

"I am pleased to hear that; you have a noble father, and I am proud to say that he and I have been friends for years. And your name?" asked the General, turning to the other young man.

"Benjamin Mayberry, sir."

General Smith laughed.

"I assume from what I have just heard and from a familiar cast in your features that you are the son of my old friend, Captain James Mayberry of Kentucky?"

"I am, sir," replied our old friend Ben, as proud as his companion of his parentage.

"Do I understand that Simon Kenton has sent you to me for the purpose of being ordered to carry a message to Major Croghan at Fort Stephenson?"

"He told us something of the kind," replied Hardin.

"What are your ages?"

"We are each a few months beyond eighteen," replied Ben.

"You are the youngest scouts I have ever known; you begin early."

"But, General," remarked Hardin, with a smile, "you mistake if you suppose we are just beginning. This will not be our first work of that kind."

"Is it possible? How long, may I ask, have you been engaged in the dangerous business?"

Ben looked into the face of his companion with an inquiring expression before making reply to the natural question.

"We have been serving you under the direction of Kenton since the beginning of the year, but we did something of the kind, off and on, for two or three years before."

"You astonish me; have you ever accompanied Kenton on his scouting expeditions?"

"Several times."

"You must have acquitted yourselves creditably, or he would not have recommended this important duty to you. Evidently Kenton is an old friend of your families."

"Yes; we took our first lessons from him. When we enlisted, the captain made objection because of our ages, but Kenton persuaded him to take us. But we were with the soldiers only a short time when Kenton had us enrolled as scouts, and we have been under his directions ever since."

"Well," said the General, with a pleased tone,

" you are proof of the kind of boys they raise in Ohio and Kentucky. I should not have dared to select you for this important work, but, since Kenton has done so, it would be ungracious for me to object. I shall be glad to discuss the matter with you some other time, but this is not the occasion. Every hour is precious; probably at this moment General Proctor is marching against Fort Stephenson with a force so large that I should be without hope were any other officer than Major Croghan in command of the post. So large a body of men cannot travel as rapidly as you through the intervening country. You know enough to keep clear of the command and its scouts, and to understand the importance of reaching Fort Stephenson several hours ahead of our enemies."

" There would be no use of our going unless we did that."

" Precisely; well, off with you, and give my message to Major Croghan; he will take all possible measures to repel the assault that is certain to be made. How long do you think it will take you to make the journey ? "

The boys were thoughtful for a few moments. Then Hardin said:

" It is now about the middle of the forenoon; we shall travel without any stop to sleep, and shall take enough food with us to eat while walking. If all

goes well, we shall be at Fort Stephenson to-morrow while the sun is high in the sky."

General Smith looked from one face to the other in delighted astonishment.

"Your hesitation tells me that you thought of your reply before making it. Upon an ordinary highway and in a straight line the distance could easily be made between sunrise and sunset, but travelling must be slower in the woods, where there are many obstructions, where you will have to make continual deviations and turns in your course, and where there are several streams of varying size to cross. Besides, you will have to use caution from the moment you are out of sight of this fort."

The youths nodded to signify that all this was accepted as a matter of course; and since there was no call for further delay, they rose to their feet. General Smith warmly shook the hand of each, wished them the best of fortune, and they passed out. As promised, they started upon the most perilous journey of their lives without tarrying, and, when the sun was in the meridian, they were several miles from Fort Meigs and in the depth of the leafy forest, which at that day covered almost the entire stretch of country between the post and Fort Stephenson on the Sandusky River.

Enough has been stated to show that young as were George Hardin and Ben Mayberry, they had a

realizing sense of the task before them. They knew that Perkins the scout had started a half-hour before. Previous to leaving the fort he had explained what he was about to undertake, and intimated that he would pursue a course somewhat to the north of the main route, which it was believed the army under General Proctor would follow. His plan was the simple one of avoiding the more slowly moving body and getting to the Sandusky ahead of them. This ordinarily would be easy, because he could travel much faster than an army with its impedimenta, but success was made more problematical by the fact that the British force had a considerable start. Moreover, since it was plentifully provided with Indian scouts, they would be on the alert to frustrate any attempt like the one he had in view.

The same disadvantage confronted the youths, though the distance which they would have to travel was slightly less than that of the elder scout, since it was more direct. The only means of succeeding was the obvious one of making such haste that the forty miles would be covered while the enemy was still some way from Fort Stephenson. This, as has been explained, was the method of the three who had undertaken to carry the warning to Major Croghan.

Hardin and Mayberry were dressed much the

same as when making their journey from the Ohio to the home of the Kentuckian two years before, but the color of their clothing was more subdued—a precaution taken on the suggestion of Simon Kenton, who adopted the common-sense course of making his garments as inconspicuous as possible. None knew better than he the danger of striking colors when on the war-trail.

The youths followed no beaten path between the two posts, though there was one, which there could be no doubt was under close surveillance throughout its entire length by their enemies. So far as appearances went, George and Ben were the first persons to penetrate the wood, which at that season was green and luxuriant, obstructed here and there by dense undergrowth, with occasional valley-like depressions, and crossed by small streams that were not looked upon as obstacles to progress. Where necessary, they could swim, and when the depth permitted they could wade. In short, the only matter that need cause them serious concern was as to how they should avoid collision with the watchful red men, who, as has been stated, were certain to do everything to prevent the success of any scheme like that which they had undertaken.

The comrades walked side by side, their rifles slung over their shoulders, while the heavy shoes pressed the leaves as softly as if they were Indian

moccasins, and the words which they uttered were in tones so low that they could not have been heard more than a few yards away.

"I wonder whether General Smith expected us to separate?" remarked Hardin.

"He said nothing about it, but it is natural he should think so, for he would believe the chances twice as good as if we kept together."

"He is sensible enough to leave Kenton and all of us to manage our business when out scouting as we think best. We 've always stuck together, Ben, and I guess we shall do so to the end. If we should part company and one of us fall, the other would always blame himself for it."

"As he ought to; but George, we are travelling through a new part of the country now, and we must n't lose our bearings."

As he spoke, the young scout drew out a small pocket compass, and the two carefully consulted it. Ordinarily the sun would have afforded sufficient guidance, but it was on the advice of their parents that each always carried one of the useful little implements. They had done their owners good service more than once, and were likely to do so again.

"Now," said Ben, "Fort Stephenson lies almost due east of Fort Meigs—perhaps a trifle south, so that if we use the compass as a guide, we ought to strike the Sandusky very close to the post."

"The rub will come to-night, when the compass won't be of use to us."

"We can strike a light now and then if we are in doubt, so as to prevent our wandering too far from the course. You must remember, too, that the moon is at the full, and there are no clouds in the sky."

"That will be of some help, but not much of the moonlight will find its way through those limbs," said Hardin, glancing upward at the branches, so covered with foliage that only an occasional patch of the blue sky could be discerned.

"It is not all like this; we shall have to go slow, but we shall keep going, and it will count. What a pity that there was n't a stream flowing in the right direction, so that we could make use of a boat!"

The youths were too practical to waste time in regrets. The only possible method of reaching their destination was by walking every step of the way, and, while holding their disjointed conversation, they were in motion, glancing keenly behind, and in all directions. As they had declared their intention, they carried with them sufficient luncheon to save the time that otherwise would have been necessary to hunt for food. They ate while they were talking, for, with two such lusty young men, their appetites made a question that could not be ignored.

Fully three hours passed, and the afternoon was well along when they came upon a narrow stream at the bottom of a hollow, where the vegetation and undergrowth were unusually dense. Thus far they had not seen anything to cause misgiving, but twice there were faint sounds that resembled the calls of some of the ordinary birds of the forest, though they suspected they were the signals of some of the Indian scouts prowling on the fringe of the advancing enemy.

"Our trail is n't likely to be noticed, if they happen to cross it," remarked Hardin, "for there are too many people moving through the woods."

"All the same we must keep a lookout to the rear," replied his companion, glancing behind him; "but here 's a creek that has to be gotten over."

They had caught the gleam of the water among the branches, which they now parted in order to gain a better view. They saw that the stream was no more than twenty feet in width at the place where they reached it, but its appearance indicated considerable depth. The current was so slow as to be almost imperceptible, and while quite clear, yet it had an inky tinge, doubtless caused by the soil over which it flowed, which prevented their seeing the bottom.

Standing thus, the question presented itself as to the best means of crossing. In one respect the

problem was simple. It was easy for each to fling his heavy rifle to the other bank and then swim over. The afternoon was sultry, and the bath in the cool water would be refreshing, whether they removed their clothing or not. If they desired to keep them dry, they could roll their garments into a compact bundle and hold them above the surface while swimming the brief distance, and it would hardly be a discomfort to make the passage in their clothing, allowing it to dry as they walked.

There was an objection to both of these plans which may strike our readers as peculiar. One of the most troublesome appendages which the scouts of former days encountered in swimming a stream was their rifles. It will be remembered that they were much heavier than the modern weapon, and formed no inconsiderable burden, though that fact caused slight inconvenience to the sturdy backwoodsman, who, when compelled to swim, strapped his gun to his back and plunged boldly into the water. Upon reaching the other side, he was generally obliged to draw the charge from the weapon and reload it, since he was quite certain to wet that which was in the barrel. This was a more tedious task than would be suspected, and was not without its danger in the presence of an enemy, who was likely to secure a fatal advantage before the new charge was available to the white man.

It has been said that all this could be avoided by tossing their guns to the other shore and swimming after them. But suppose some of the Indian scouts were near and observed the movement? The youths would simply surrender to them by placing in their hands the only means with which the comrades could defend themselves. The recourse was tempting, but it was one against which Simon Kenton more than once had earnestly warned them.

"There 's two mistakes, younkers, that you must n't make," said the veteran; "when you 've fired your gun, don't stir from your tracks till you 've reloaded it, no matter how things are going about you; and never let your gun go out of your hands when you 're in an Injin country, so long as you 've got the strength to squeeze your fingers round it."

It was wise counsel, a disregard of which caused more than one death on the frontier in the olden days.

Ben and George paused for only a minute or two at the point where they had gained their first view of the obstructing stream. The same thought came to both.

"It may be narrow enough in other places for us to jump," suggested Ben, "or there may be some bending tree that will serve as a bridge."

They acted upon the hope without delay. Ben intended to turn down-stream, but observing that

his companion had taken the opposite course, he softly followed him without speaking. Neither forgot the necessity of caution in everything that was done. They were convinced that General Proctor with his strong force was several miles to the north, and there was no doubt that he had a large number of scouts out, some of whom could not be far from the spot where the youths were stealing through the undergrowth.

Hardin had proceeded hardly a hundred yards in this stealthy manner when he stopped, and, turning slightly to one side in the direction of the water, drew the bushes aside and peered through. One glance was enough, and with his glowing face toward his companion, just behind him, he beckoned him to approach. The next instant the young Kentuckian was at his elbow.

They had come upon the very thing for which they were searching. The stream was not only narrower, but a large maple had fallen in such a way that while the roots were on their side, the upper branches lay on the farther shore. The trunk formed such a good foot-bridge that it looked as if some pioneer had chopped it down to serve that purpose, but a second glance showed that a stroke of lightning had done the job as cleverly as the hand of man could have accomplished it.

"Now, that 's what I call good luck," whispered

Hardin; "we 'll be on the other side in a jiffy, and, if all the creeks have the same sort of bridges, it will be easy work to reach Fort Stephenson."

He allowed the bushes to close again, and moved toward the trunk, which lay but a few paces away. It was easy to step upon that, when, as he had just said, they would be upon the other shore in a twinkling. While in the act of raising his foot, his companion suddenly seized his arm and drew him back.

"What 's the matter?" asked Hardin, turning his startled face around, but speaking in a guarded undertone.

"Did n't you hear it?"

"That robin? We 've heard it twenty times on the way here."

"We don't know that it is a robin—sh!"

The apparently harmless chirping had come from some point opposite, and a precisely similar cry now sounded behind them. Birds frequently signal to one another, and this could well be an instance of this kind, with the possibility that the gentle call came from the throat of a Shawanoe and was answered by a brother warrior. The precaution of Ben was wise, and his comrade offered no protest against his summary stoppage while in the act of stepping upon the natural bridge. The two stood together, fully screened by the dense foliage, and listened.

They could hardly believe that their presence had

been discovered, for they were so walled in by the undergrowth that it was impossible to see the other side of the creek, near as it was. It followed, therefore, that they themselves were invisible to any parties on the farther bank, while the approach to the spot had been so guarded that it seemed equally impossible that it had been observed.

Their motionless posture was maintained for ten minutes or more, during which they neither saw nor heard anything to alarm them. The robin's chirp was not repeated, or, if it was, the bird had flown so far that the musical call could not reach the ears of the listeners.

"Ben," whispered his friend, beginning to grow impatient, "we shall never get to the fort in time if we loiter like this."

"We 'll never get to it at all if we make any blunder. If you think it is safe, go ahead, and I 'll follow."

Once more Hardin placed his shoe on one of the gnarled roots which had been uptorn by the fall of the massive trunk, but before he could throw his whole weight upon it and lift himself to the upper side of the bark, he withdrew his foot and again stood beside his friend.

"What 's up?" asked Ben. "I did n't hear anything."

"*I did,*" was the startling response.

CHAPTER X.

WITH A STREAM BETWEEN THEM.

BEN MAYBERRY was mystified. He had not heard anything suspicious, though listening with the intentness of his companion. The two were so close that they could speak without risk of being overheard.

"What was it, George?"

"I don't know; did n't you hear it?"

"If I had I should n't be asking you questions. What did it sound like?"

"It was as if some one had struck the trunk of the tree a gentle blow."

"Could n't it have been made by your foot as you placed it on the root?"

"It was just an instant before I did that, but so near the time that I could n't help putting down my foot—what are you doing?"

The young Kentuckian took a single step forward, which brought him within reach of the base of the fallen trunk. Leaning over, he pressed his ear against the shaggy bark, but it was only for an instant, when he raised his head as quickly as if he

had touched red-hot metal. His countenance betrayed his fright.

"There 's some one on the log!" he whispered; "move back!"

They recoiled several steps, which were sufficient because of the density of the undergrowth already referred to. Through the better conductor of sound, Ben had detected the soft sound made by moccasins treading the prostrate tree. Had Hardin mounted the trunk and started across, he would have met a buck, who an instant before mounted the farther end of the bridge and started for the side upon which the youths were crouching.

It was the narrowest escape conceivable. Five seconds later, or the thinning of the undergrowth, would have made discovery inevitable. As it was, the youths caught the twinkle of the leggings and skirt of an Indian, as he came along the trunk, and without pausing upon reaching the base, leaped lightly to the ground on the same side with George and Ben, who now saw his figure distinctly. Each grasped his gun closer, for they did not mean that their foe should gain any advantage in the encounter.

Providentially, however, the Shawanoe had no suspicion of the nearness of the youths, and did not glance in their direction, since, had he done so, he could not have failed to discover them. At the

moment of alighting on the ground he was looking to the westward, away from the stream, as if expecting a signal or the appearance of some person.

Standing thus, he emitted a low, musical chirping, the perfect imitation of the happy cry of a robin when fluttering among the limbs of an apple orchard. It was immediately answered from a point only a few rods away, and the warrior strode several paces toward it. Had he remained where he was until the arrival of his friend, nothing could have averted the detection of the youths crouching among the undergrowth. As it was, the Shawanoes met so near, that, although screened by the dense vegetation, their voices were heard, as they held their conversation in the low, guttural words of their native tongue—a fact which prevented the eavesdroppers from understanding a syllable of what was uttered, though every word was audible.

Ben touched the shoulder of his comrade, who, understanding his meaning, retrograded with such extreme caution that no noise was made. Their fear was that the warriors would return across the fallen tree, and if they did so, it was too much to expect them to fail to see the boys, if the latter retained their former position.

While the brief conversation was under way, George and Ben did not so much as exchange a whispered word. The risk seemed too great,

though had they been less apprehensive, they must have known it was safe to speak in guarded undertones.

By and by silence succeeded the murmur of voices, but the listeners feared that it was only a break in the conversation which would be resumed in a few seconds. Inasmuch as the Shawanoes must not have suspected that there was any call for unusual precaution on their part, they were not likely to take pains to make their footsteps noiseless; but the intently listening ears failed to detect so much as the rustling of a leaf or the faint cry of a bird. The stillness was as profound as if the wilderness had never been invaded by foot of man or animal.

When the silence had lasted for a number of minutes, Ben found courage to speak in a whisper and with his mouth close to the ear of his comrade.

"Do you believe they have gone away?"

"It looks so, but we would better wait awhile longer."

And wait they did, until, growing bolder, they partly rose to their feet, stole forward, and parting the undergrowth in front of their faces, peered about them like a couple of lynxes. They knew the exact point where the two warriors stood while conversing, and with infinite care continued their

advance until able to observe the precise spot. Neither of them was to be seen.

"They have gone," was the declaration of Hardin, uttered with assurance this time.

"And toward Fort Meigs; what do you make of it, George?"

"It is hard to guess; I should n't wonder if they were watching this tree, with the expectation that some of our scouts will cross, for almost any one of them would use the trunk rather than swim."

"Why, then, did they leave the place?"

"Don't ask me to tell you, for we might guess all the afternoon and be a mile from the truth. But I know one thing, my fine fellow—we ain't making much progress toward the Sandusky."

"You are right; at this rate, we shall not get there in a week. Since they have gone, let 's use the bridge and then hurry off."

"Suppose there are more of them with their eyes on it?"

There seemed little likelihood of this being the fact, but it was in accordance with their training that before making the venture the youths carefully studied the other bank, both up and down stream, so far as lay in their field of vision, but without observing anything to cause misgiving. When they were on the point of making the venture, Ben's keen sense of caution asserted itself.

"I can't help feeling that it 's risky; you know it 's our principle to stick together, but it is best that we should separate for a few minutes."

"I don't understand you."

"Let one of us cross first while the other keeps out of sight; if everything looks right, we shall be together again right away."

George Hardin would not have consented to this proposal had he believed it involved the least danger to either, but he was convinced that the two Shawanoes were the only ones in the immediate vicinity. Numerous as were the red men that were assisting General Proctor, there were not enough of them to place a party at every point along a stream where it might be thought likely some of the Americans would cross.

"I 'll pass over first," said young Hardin, "and take a look up and down the bank; if everything is clear, I will signal to you."

"Rather, if everything looks clear, you won't signal at all. I 'll wait until you have had time to look around and, if all remains still, will hurry after you. If you think there is anything suspicious, make the cat-bird call; that's the one we have always used as a warning of danger, and I 'll understand it."

"All right, but don't wait too long."

As he spoke, Hardin once more placed his foot on the gnarled root that had partly borne his weight

before, and the second step lifted him upon the comparatively smooth trunk of the maple, for there was no outgrowth of limbs until some feet beyond the edge of the farther bank.

A peculiar sensation came over him when he felt that he was in the most conspicuous position he had held since leaving the fort. He was now directly over the sluggish stream, unscreened by so much as a single branch, and in full view of any one within several rods of the place, if he happened to be looking in that direction. The consciousness caused him to hasten his steps, so that instead of walking, he trotted the entire length of the bridge and leaped to the ground before he had reached it.

Meanwhile, Ben Mayberry, carefully veiled among the undergrowth, stood motionless as a statue, with one hand slightly parting the bushes in front of his face, so as to permit him to follow the movements of his friend. He noted the quickening of his footsteps and understood the cause. The next minute he saw him drop lightly to the ground, and with the same absence of noise disappear in the bushes.

The assurance of his friend had partly communicated itself to him. He expected to wait no more than three or four minutes, when he too would climb the log and hasten after Hardin, and then both would press on with all haste to Fort Stephenson, still a long distance to the eastward.

"I wonder whether there 's such a thing as being *too* careful," he mused, half smiling at the thought; "I know what Kenton would say to a question like that. I don't believe there 's any use of my waiting—— "

He had rested one foot on the twisted root, just as Hardin did, when he withdrew it again, as if before the warning signal of a rattlesnake. In truth, the vicious buzzing of that reptile could not have startled him more than the sound, so different in its nature, that reached him, for it was the cat-bird's call from the other side of the creek, near the very spot where George Hardin had vanished from sight!

"Heaven save us!" muttered the young Kentuckian; "George is in trouble."

What else could the signal mean, when it had been agreed within the preceding five minutes that it should have no other signification?

Young as was Ben Mayberry, he had learned to be cool in the presence of every kind of peril, but never was he so startled as in the present instance, because, aside from the startling meaning of the signal, he had just reached the point of persuading himself that he would not hear it. He could hardly restrain himself from leaping upon the maple and running to the help of his comrade. All that prevented was the uncertainty whether his help was needed.

The signal, as will be remembered, was simply a

warning that for the present Ben must not cross the stream by means of the prostrate tree. Had the signal been repeated, it would have been a call to Ben to go to the aid of his friend. With a rapidly throbbing heart he listened, almost hoping that he would hear it again, for he could not remain idle while able to strike a blow for him who was as dear to him as his own life.

One fact was self-evident: with all of Ben's eagerness to place himself upon the other side of the stream, it would not do to make use of the means before him. Good fortune had favored Hardin, who had scarcely reached the other bank when he discovered the peril of his friend, and at what must have been a dangerous risk to himself, had warned him against the attempt.

By this time, too, the Kentuckian had regained control of himself. He reasoned with the acumen of Simon Kenton, who always did that which his calm judgment told him was the best thing to do. The first necessity was for Ben to reach the other shore, by crossing at some other point. To ascend the bank of the creek was to place himself nearer the main body of the enemy. Therefore, he faced southward and began his progress with the care he had shown from the first, not stopping until he had gone fully two hundred yards, by which time he was far beyond sight of the fallen maple.

It was a cause of the keenest regret to the young Kentuckian that he and Hardin had not arranged a fuller system of signals. The agreement was simply that George should notify him, if necessary, not to cross by means of the tree. Ben yearned to ask him some question or to agree upon a line of procedure, but though they had made use many times of ingenious methods of communicating with each other, it was impossible now to reach any understanding by such means. Furthermore, he dared not make the trial, since it was almost certain to involve George in still greater danger. He had taken perilous chances in signalling to Ben as it was. To do anything further in that direction would reveal himself to the Indians who were evidently near, while it was impossible that it should help Ben himself.

Having picked his way along shore for the distance mentioned, Ben paused to decide upon the best means of crossing the stream. He observed that it had narrowed to that extent that he could have made the leap had it been possible to gain a running start, but with the tangled undergrowth and bushes, such a thing was out of the question, and not even Kenton could perform the exploit without the aid named.

Loath to swim the creek, Ben continued looking for an opening, as it may be called, all the time

moving farther down-stream, until suddenly he descried that for which he was hunting.

It was not a prostrate tree, shivered by lightning, as in the case of the maple, but at a point where the creek was still straiter, an oak was growing, whose extended branches promised to serve him equally well. It looked as if the tree, which was larger than the maple, had started with the purpose of carrying its limbs over among those on the other bank, but before doing so, had changed its intention and resumed its climbing toward the meridian. Thus curving outward and upward, the lowermost branch, as thick as a man's leg, pushed horizontally across, until its bushy extremity was several feet beyond the edge of the creek. All Ben had to do, therefore, was to climb the trunk a little way, and then pass out on the limb, until far enough to make the slight leap necessary to land him on the other shore. He set about doing it at once.

In a task of this nature he needed both arms. By means of the strong cord he always carried for such use, he slung his heavy rifle over his shoulder, where it was out of the way, though liable to bother him if he climbed far. But he was accustomed to such work, and it took him but a brief while to reach the sturdy branch that promised to serve him so well.

Placing himself astride of the firm support, as if it were the back of a horse, he paused for a minute to

listen and peer around him. The stillness was so profound that it was oppressive, but he had waited only a few seconds when it was broken in the most startling manner. The sharp report of a rifle rang through the woods, coming from a point on the farther bank of the stream, and somewhat to the left, which was in the direction taken by George Hardin.

"Can it be *his* gun?" gasped Ben, "or has some one fired at him?"

It would seem that in either case there must be a sequel to the report. If Hardin had shot an Indian, his victim would have emitted the cry without which hardly any one of his race gives up the ghost, and, if the youth was the victim, there would have been something to follow, but the grave itself was not more silent than the surrounding forest during the minutes spent by Ben Mayberry in listening.

"We thought we had turned far enough south to get clear of all of them," was the bitter thought of Ben, "but it looks as if we had struck a hornet's nest. Heaven protect poor George, and me too," he added, as he began working his way along the limb. The task was not difficult, and it did not take him long to reach a point from which he readily leaped to the ground. Thus at last the creek was crossed, without wetting his garments or the charge in his gun, which was quickly brought round to the

front and grasped with both hands, ready for instant service.

Ben Mayberry was now called upon to make the most painful decision of his life. His whole yearning was to hunt up George Hardin and to devote all his energy to extricating him from his trouble, if it should so prove that he was still alive. If Hardin was a prisoner of the Shawanoes, with Ben free, the latter was confident he could render him effective service. The help of some of the other scouts could be obtained, or, as a last resort, an appeal might be made to Tecumseh to secure him good treatment, as that chieftain would be sure to grant, if he knew of the straits of his former acquaintance.

But why was Ben Mayberry in the Ohio woods, several miles from Fort Meigs? He had been sent to take a message of momentous importance to a garrison of more than one hundred men that were in danger of annihilation, and he had given his pledge that he would travel night and day to accomplish that task. Honor forbade him to allow anything to interfere with the carrying out of the duty.

It is more than probable that many another person placed in the situation of Ben Mayberry would have been able to square matters with their consciences by deferring the execution of the pledge until everything possible had been done for the

missing companion, and would it be easy to condemn them for following such a course ?

Ben did not forget that a more veteran scout than he, in the person of Perkins, was engaged at the same task, and that his start was made first. According to human reasoning, if any white man could get through, Perkins was the one, and if he failed, it was useless for youths to undertake it. Was it not fair to assume that the veteran was already far on the road and would reach Fort Stephenson long before the younger scouts, even if the latter travelled uninterruptedly ?

Such was the question that Ben Mayberry put to himself the moment after landing on the farther bank and while he paused for a moment to decide upon his course. It cannot be denied that the law of probabilities would have answered the question he put to himself in the affirmative, and yet it is equally undeniable that as events go in this world, a negative answer might be the true one.

A still stronger argument in favor of dismissing every other thought from his mind until the fate of George Hardin was determined was that the journey upon which the comrades had started appeared to be unnecessary. It was known all through the country that General Proctor and his Indian allies were fighting viciously in the northern part of Ohio, and striking many savage blows. Every exposed

post and point was on the alert and vigilant. Was it possible, therefore, that Major George Croghan, with the reputation of being one of the most skilful and among the bravest officers in the regular army, would be caught off his guard? Could he fail to know that with his weak garrison he was certain to be attacked by an overwhelming force of the enemy? Was it not, in truth, in the nature of a reflection upon his sagacity to act as if he required to be told that he was in danger?

These arguments might have convinced some, but they were too specious for Ben Mayberry to deceive himself by means of them. If General Smith did not believe there was urgent need of his message going to Fort Stephenson, he would not have sent it. Ben Mayberry was one of those to whom the General had given his confidence, and the honor of the youth was in the scale.

"God aiding me, I shall go to Fort Stephenson," he said firmly. And it is of such stuff that the true Kentuckian is made.

CHAPTER XI.

HE-THAT-SEES-WITH-ONE-EYE.

HAVING decided upon the course that duty demanded, Ben Mayberry did not hesitate. He was now on the farther side of the creek, and a good many miles remained to be travelled before he could reach Fort Stephenson with his warning message to Major Croghan, the commandant. Noon had passed, and it would require brisk action to reach his destination within the time he had given himself. He compressed his lips, and, with a murmured prayer for the safety of his comrade, strode off at a rapid pace.

It must not be supposed that Ben had given up hope respecting young Hardin. It was not impossible that he had escaped the dangers which threatened him, and was himself pressing to the eastward with the same haste as Ben. He may have found himself so placed that he dared make no more signals, and was obliged to use all his woodcraft to extricate himself. And yet the dread that some frightful calamity had overtaken the brave Hardin weighed down the spirits of the

youthful Kentuckian, who was resolved that only Providence should prevent him from carrying out the pledge he had made to General Smith.

The ground over which he was now travelling was comparatively level. There was less undergrowth than near the stream, and walking was easy. With the rapid, noiseless step that he had learned from Kenton, he pressed onward, glancing in all directions, and listening with the utmost intentness. The twittering of a bird in the branches overhead, the rustling of a leaf, or the gentle sigh of the afternoon wind which occasionally stirred the vegetation, were noted at first with suspicion, and then dismissed from his thoughts as soon as he identified them. It was the continual apprehension of new sights and sounds that kept his mind busy.

Ben advanced in this manner for several miles without hearing or meeting with anything to cause misgiving. His gait, indeed, was so keen that, if permitted to continue it, he was sure of accomplishing his task in ample time. No more streams had interposed, though it was reasonable to expect that several would have to be crossed during his journey. He had reached a region where the ground was more elevated, and occasional rocks and boulders were encountered, when he was startled by the unmistakable tread of some person or animal directly in front of him. Like a flash, Ben leaped behind

the nearest tree, with one hand grasping the barrel of his rifle and the other closed about the trigger and hammer, ready for instant action.

Whatever it was he must quickly learn, for the stranger was approaching in a straight line. The heavy tread indicated that it was a quadruped, for no person would be guilty of such carelessness. The belief of the youth was verified the next moment, when the largest black bear he had ever seen swung into view from among the trees, and, with tongue lolling, came ponderously forward.

Instinctively, Ben brought his gun to his shoulder, as he stepped out from behind the trunk, and levelled his weapon at the brute. No fairer shot could have been asked, and he was confident that the single bullet, driven into the massive body through the hairy chest, would penetrate the heart and drop the beast in his tracks.

But with his finger on the trigger, he lowered his gun. It was well enough to bring down this king of the forest, but the consequences of such a shot were not to be forgotten. Proof had already been given that the Shawanoe scouts were prowling through the woods, and the report of the gun was likely to draw them to the spot. The occasion was one for the young hunter to restrain his impulses, and he did so.

"If you will let me alone, Mr. Bear," he muttered, "I won't bother you."

Whether Bruin would be thus considerate looked doubtful. At sight of the youth, he stopped short, as if puzzled, and surveyed him for several seconds, apparently debating in his own soggy mind whether to attack or pass his enemy by. To turn about and run would be to invite the beast to assail him, for nothing can be more inspiriting than the sight of a fleeing foe. It was because of this fact that Ben held his ground, hoping that a bold front would scare the brute away.

Failing to accomplish this, he decided to make a strategic retreat. Instead of turning about and dashing off, he began edging to the right, with a view of flanking his enemy. He was determined not to fire unless attacked, when he could settle the business with a single shot.

"If you know what is best for you, you will stay where you are," said Ben, stepping softly, but with weapon ready for use and his gaze fixed upon the beast, whose conduct was not without a certain humorous feature. He did not advance or retreat, but acted as if puzzled. He kept his huge head turned toward the young man, his jaws open, his red tongue dangling, as if he felt the sultriness of the afternoon, and his big brown eyes were never once removed from the youth. As plainly as if in words his conduct said:

"I don't know what you are driving at, young

man, but I intend to keep an eye on you, and be ready for any tricks."

After a time the twisting of his head seemed to grow irksome, and bruin righted matters by a peculiar movement. Instead of shifting the fore part of his body, he swung the rear around, so that from his stumpy tail to his head it was a direct line to the young hunter. This manœuvre took place when the flanking movement was half completed, and nothing more was necessary; for Ben, without waiting until exactly beyond, continued to inch to one side, with a view of passing out of sight, before returning to his original line of advance. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to give a more decided character to his retreat, observing which, bruin started toward him.

"None of that!" warned Ben, abruptly pausing and again raising his gun; "if you come any nearer, you are a dead bear!"

It is not to be supposed that the brute had any comprehension of the meaning of Ben's conduct; nevertheless, he paused in his advance and continued his wondering stare at the hunter who was conducting himself so oddly. Never forgetting the value of the passing minutes, Ben now began a direct retreat. Instead of circling about the animal, he stepped backward, with his gaze upon his foe and ready to let fly the moment he renewed his approach.

He did not do so, and Ben slightly quickened his movement. Unable to see where he was going, he had taken but a few steps when he backed against an obstructing chestnut. A glance over his shoulder enabled him to correct the blunder, and, making sure that he had a clear field for several paces, he increased his retrogression, with the bear wonderingly surveying him.

It is unsafe, however, for the most skilful woodman to walk backward through the forest without using his eyes. An unseen vine, as tough as an iron wire, caught Ben's heel, and before he could kick it loose, he went over on his back with his feet pointing toward the sky.

"Confound it!" he muttered, hurriedly leaping up again; "that will bring him sure."

But how often a seeming misfortune proves a blessing. At the moment when the youth was certain he must use his gun, regardless of the consequences, he saw a singular sight. The bear had not retained his position, it is true, but instead of charging upon his prostrate enemy, he turned and lumbered off, as if in a panic of fear. His species are noted for their stupidity, and it must have been that the puzzled beast was so startled by the back somersault of the youth that he accepted it as some dangerous demonstration against himself, and decided to get away from the neighborhood as soon as he could.

Ben stood silently laughing until the huge creature had swung out of sight among the trees, and the wood was as before. Then he replaced his weapon on his shoulder and once more faced to the eastward.

"That 's the first time I ever saw a bear scared out of his wits by a fellow tumbling over on his back. I should think that such a performance would make him try to get at him before he could rise again, and——"

The youth stopped with a shock that almost raised his cap from his crown. From some point a short distance off and in the direction taken by bruin, came the vicious crack of a rifle. In hurrying away from the Kentuckian, the brute had evidently run against another person who was less considerate, and promptly gave him his quietus.

It was impossible to conjecture the meaning of the incident. Hope suggested that George Hardin, inspired by the same high sense of duty, was pressing toward Fort Stephenson, when, finding himself suddenly assailed by the frightened bear, he was compelled to slay him in self-defence. The probability however, was that the shot had come from one of the Indian scouts, who were still in the neighborhood, and so close to Ben that his peril was of the most threatening nature.

He stood for a minute or two, listening and peer-

ing in the direction of the report. All remained as before, when, yielding to an irresistible impulse, he emitted a clear signal that could not fail to reach his friend if he were anywhere near, and reaching him, would bring an instant response, but the listening ear caught no reply.

"It is n't George," was the conclusion of Ben, who started off at a pace that was almost a lope, while he was impressed more than ever by his danger.

It has been said that the section through which he was now passing was somewhat higher and was broken by boulders and rocks. Finding himself face to face with a mass of obstructions, the young Kentuckian resorted to an artifice, simple of itself, but which would not have occurred to one untrained in the ways of the woods. He climbed upon the nearest boulder and began picking his way with the utmost care over them.

His object in doing this was to baffle any of his enemies who might attempt to follow him by means of his trail. Had he worn moccasins, the imprint of his feet would not have attracted suspicious attention on the part of any Shawanoe, when so many of his race were moving through the wood, but a distinct impression of Ben's shoes, such as he had been forced to make where the ground was soft, would disclose that it was a white person in the

neighborhood, and being such was an American; for while the scouts of General Proctor at that time were Indians, it was known that General Smith as well as General Harrison was making use of Simon Kenton and his trained associates.

While the sun was shining, it was impossible for Ben Mayberry to hide his footprints among the trees, but he could readily do so by walking over the bare surfaces of the boulders and rocks, where no impression was left, and nothing less than a bloodhound could track him.

In another and more delicate respect did the young Kentuckian give proof of the training he had received in woodcraft. It will be understood that if any of his enemies came upon his trail and traced it to the rocks, they would not consider themselves fully baffled until they had gone farther, by following their own judgment and acting upon what may be termed "general principles." In other words, noting the direction of the footprints in approaching the boulders, they would conclude that the same course had been continued, and that they had only to pass to the other side of the obstructions to strike the trail again.

Ben did not forget this probability, for he avoided giving such a clue to his course. As soon as secure against exposing his footprints, he turned abruptly to one side, intending to leave the rocks, as if his

line of flight was at right angles to the one he had been following. While this might not wholly defeat his enemies, since they could recover the trail by continued searching, it would so delay pursuit that he would have opportunity to place a considerable distance between himself and those whom he held in dread.

He was greatly relieved to find his chance better than he anticipated. The rocky formation covered more than an acre, and, by several powerful leaps, he attained a point considerably beyond a hundred yards from where he left the ground, before it became necessary to descend to earth again. There he paused and looked round in quest of more boulders that could be turned to account.

There was not a moment when the young fugitive, as he may be considered, forgot to keep watch of the wood around him, and especially in the direction whence came the report of the rifle, but he now made a discovery of the most disquieting nature. A flickering movement among the trees to the rear apprised him that some one was approaching from the dreaded point. Without waiting a second, Ben stepped down so that the boulder upon which he had been standing screened him from sight, and watched for the stranger to come into plainer view. As he did so, the young Kentuckian uttered a low exclamation of amazement.

In the first place there could be no doubt that the individual was following Ben's trail. He was continually glancing at the leaves over which the youth had passed, though his head flitted from side to side, with the bird-like quickness shown by the trained scout, and which takes note of everything in his field of vision. The shock that came to Ben, however, was due not so much to this fact as to the identity of the person, whom he recognized at the first glance. He was a Wyandot half-breed, known as Wallah, which signified in his native tongue, He-that-sees-with-one-eye. In other words, he was blind in one of his eyes, having been so from childhood.

Wallah, in opposition to his tribe, had pronounced in favor of the Americans when war broke out with Great Britain. Skilled in the ways of the woods, he offered to serve General Harrison as one of his scouts, and his offer was accepted. Simon Kenton had a deep prejudice against all mongrels, holding that none of them was trustworthy, and he warned the General not to trust the half-breed, for the pioneer believed he would betray him on the first opportunity, and was in the American lines for no other purpose than to help the public enemy.

Wallah was subjected to several tests, in all of which he acquitted himself so creditably that he disarmed suspicion with every one except Kenton. He

did good work for the Americans, and expressed an eagerness to do more. In answer to the reproof of General Harrison, the sturdy old scout said:

"It 's his natur'; he can't help it; you have n't trusted him fur enough yet; he 's waiting fur that time, and then he 'll show his true colors."

The first impulse of Ben Mayberry when he recognized the half-breed was to rise from behind the rock, swing his cap and call to him, for what could be more cheering than to have such an experienced ally in the perilous task he had undertaken to perform? But something, undoubtedly the recollection of Kenton's words, restrained Ben, and he continued to crouch behind the boulder, with his cap removed and his head raised just enough to permit him to peer around the corner of a projection on top of the stone.

The significant question which the young Kentuckian asked himself was as to why Wallah was following his trail with such persistency. He must have recognized the footprints as made by a white man, and since none of the British was in the vicinity, that ought to have been proof that the one whom he was dogging was a friend, provided Wallah was what he professed to be. Be that as it may, Ben wisely decided to await developments before revealing himself. He had secured a position from which he could peer out without showing more than

one eye and the corner of his forehead, and the keenest vision could not detect them from the other side of the stony section.

With the peculiar flitting movement of the head described, Wallah approached the rocks until he reached the point where the youth had stepped upward from the ground. There he abruptly stopped and looked off over the billowy surface in front of him. The action brought his face into full view, and it would be hard to picture a more repellant one.

The half-breed dressed as an Indian, and was so much like one that only those who knew him would have suspected that he had white blood in his veins. His coarse, black hair dangled about his shoulders, but there were no feathers or ornaments in it. Like most of his people, his forehead was low and broad, his cheekbones prominent and his features irregular. He had a retreating chin, a wide mouth, and, what was remarkable, his teeth were imperfect and displeasing in appearance. A blow received years before had broken his nose, so that it was twisted out of all pretence to symmetry. There was no paint on his face, his case being one of the exceedingly few in which such a fashion would have improved instead of distracting from his looks. There was some force in the impatient reply that Simon Kenton once made to General Harrison's reproof:

"No creatur' with such a face can be anything but an imp on two legs."

Ben Mayberry and George Hardin were among those who believed Kenton was unjustly moved against the fellow that was unfortunate enough to be ill-looking, but the faith of the young Kentuckian was shaken when he discovered the mongrel trailing him, and wholly dissipated by his hideous expression, as he paused at the edge of the rocks and peered like a famishing wolf over the tops of them.

"He knows he is following George or me, and he is looking for a chance to shoot me in the back. If I was really certain, I would pick him off as he stands there like a dog that has had a piece of meat snatched from its jaws."

And it was only the single lingering doubt that restrained the youth from shooting the half-breed, as he would have shot a mad dog that leaped at his throat. He could not slay the fellow while the uncertainty remained; he would therefore wait for further proof, for there was the bare possibility that he might be mistaken.

Ben expected Wallah to leap upon the rocks and hasten across them to the other side in his search for the trail, but he did not do so. His single evil eye roamed over the rough, broken surfaces, and then, still maintaining his position, he partly turned away his head and emitted a call, different from any

signal that the wondering Kentuckian had ever heard. He repeated it after the interval of about a minute, and then a Shawanoe warrior emerged into view and came directly toward the half-breed.

They met in a friendly manner, and, standing within a couple of paces of each other, held a conversation accompanied by excited gestures.

The proof for which Ben Mayberry was waiting had come. This meeting left no doubt that the half-breed was a spy upon the Americans, and that everything he did was with a full understanding on the part of the Shawanoes and Wyandots. Nothing would have given the young Kentuckian greater satisfaction than to shoot down the traitor as he stood within easy range, but the reader hardly needs to be reminded that, so long as Wallah had a companion, the act would have been highly imprudent on the part of the indignant youth.

CHAPTER XII.

THROUGH MANY PERILS.

BEN MAYBERRY never once removed his eyes from the half-breed and the Shawanoe. They stood with their sides towards him, so that for most of the time he saw their faces in profile. The Indian did the greater part of the gesticulating, though occasionally Wallah swung one of his arms and shook his head in a fashion that showed he was as much in earnest as his companion in whatever he said.

It was useless for the young Kentuckian to try to guess what was spoken, though he could not doubt that it referred to him. He was inclined more than once to steal out from his hiding-place and take to the woods, but was restrained by the likelihood that such action would be fatal; for with two men searching for the trail, they were sure speedily to recover it when their pursuit would become so vigorous that they must overtake him before he could go more than a mile or two. It would be hopeless to contend against two such veteran woodsmen, though,

had there been but one, he would have felt little dread of him.

Men like the two whom he was watching are more accustomed to action than words, and despite the vigor of the conversation, it lasted but a short time, when, to the alarm of Ben, both sprang lightly upon the rocks and started across the tops in a direct line, thus proving the correctness of the youth's theory as to their method of pursuit. It was dangerous for him to watch them, but he did so until, reaching the farther side, they leaped to the ground, probably expecting to find the trail after a minute's search. Failing in that, they began a systematic hunt for it.

When this point was attained, the crouching fugitive knew it would not do for him to watch further. In making their circuit of the boulders, as they were certain to do, they would come perilously near his hiding-place. The exposure of the slightest part of his body would betray him and he was too wise to run the risk.

But a most dangerous feature of the business now presented itself: what would be the conclusion of the couple after making the circuit of the rocks without finding the telltale footprints? Would it not naturally be that the young man was hiding somewhere among the boulders themselves? If so, then they would continue their hunt there.

"And if I stay in this spot they will come upon me," was his thought, as he glanced around for some more secure hiding-place. Fortune favored him in this respect, for at his feet was an inward curve of one of the boulders, between which he was stooping, sufficiently large to admit his body. Better still, it would not be noticed by any one from above, and would have escaped the eye of the youth but for his prone position.

Stooping still lower, he crawled beneath as far as he could get, and then stretched out, backing against the stone wall to the rear as closely as if his life depended upon it, which was probably the fact. As he lay, the huge boulder projected more than a foot beyond his body. The sun was so low in the sky that the open space between the rocks, upon which he could look, and which was no more than a yard in width, was only dimly lighted. His thoughts were busy.

"They must know that there are a hundred places where a fellow can hide himself, so that a long search is needed, and even then they may miss him. I have n't left any trace that will guide them to this spot, and, if they happen to look down here, they won't suspect that I have squeezed out of sight. All that I have to do is to wait until they leave before coming out.

"But how am I to know when they leave?" was

his natural query; "if they suspect that I am somewhere among the rocks, they may steal off and wait for me to show myself."

This suggested the only safe course open to him, which was to remain in hiding until night had fully come. When the woods were dark, it would be a comparatively easy matter to steal into the woods unseen.

"At this rate it will be a long time before I see Fort Stephenson," he mused; "but it will be a good deal sooner than if I never get there at all."

Perhaps fifteen minutes passed in perfect silence, during which the temptation was strong to creep back into the narrow passage and take a peep at his enemies, but Ben Mayberry would have been unworthy of the name of a Kentucky backwoodsman had he done so. He lay motionless, hearing no sound except the throbbing of his own heart, which, however, was as regular as when he was talking with General Smith at the Fort. At the end of the time named, he heard a sound so faint that it could not be identified, though he was certain it was caused by one of his enemies.

Reflection convinced Ben that either the Shawanoe or half-breed had paused upon the rock underneath which he was hiding. As the children say when hunting for some hidden object, the searchers were becoming perilously "hot." They were

within a few paces of the missing one, who breathlessly awaited their next move.

The alarming disadvantage of Ben Mayberry if detected will be noted. In his cramped position under the rock, where he had squeezed his body until he could barely move, he was wholly unable to defend himself. If caught at all, it would be like a rat in a trap, where resistance was out of the question.

It is impossible to imagine a more trying situation than that of the young Kentuckian within the following five minutes. His face being turned outward, he plainly saw the other side of the narrow, cañon-like passage, while his hiding-place was within two or three feet of the top of the rock which did him such good service. While peering and listening with all his senses, two moccasins suddenly dangled in front of his eyes.

Either the half-breed or the Shawanoe had sat down on the crest of the stone and allowed his feet to hang over into the narrow passage. This brought them just low enough for the youth to see the soles and a small portion of the sides. His eyes remained fixed upon them from the instant they came into sight.

"They belong to Wallah," was his conclusion, though he could give himself no reason for such belief, for he had never been favored with a view of

the soles of his foot-gear, nor was it to be supposed that they possessed any distinctive peculiarity.

There is little shape or symmetry to an Indian moccasin, its resemblance being to that of a turtle or dumpling. The toes naturally being lower than the heels, Ben saw the whole length of the bottom of the foot. Unlike the ordinary shoe, the moccasin has no real sole, or additional leather, the untanned deerskin of which it is formed being generally sewn in a seam from toe to heel.

The most trifling objects impress themselves upon one at such a time. The youth noted that the right moccasin was worn more than its mate, that there were grains of sand and dirt attached, and when the owner unconsciously moved his toes, some of the particles dropped to the ground. The left foot remained as motionless as if made of wood, while to the right was imparted a slightly swaying motion, such as one naturally indulges in when sitting at ease and with his feet unsupported. By reaching forward with one hand, without stirring his body, Ben Mayberry could have seized either of the moccasins and yanked the astounded owner from his seat.

Suddenly the man spoke, as if addressing his companion, who replied from the opposite side of the passage. What was said could not be understood, since it was uttered in the Indian tongue,

but it added another startling feature to the extraordinary situation. If the second person should advance and seat himself on the other rock, he could hardly fail to observe the cavity directly beneath the dangling moccasins. The youth expected him to do this, in which event he would be satisfied that his enemies had already located him, and were playing with their victim as a cat does with a mouse before crunching it in her jaws.

Whether it was the Shawanoe or half-breed he did not advance, but remained standing some yards away. Then both moccasins whisked out of sight. The owner had drawn them up and risen to his feet. The next moment he leaped across the narrow passage, joined his companion, and the two departed to some unknown point. Is it possible to conceive of a narrower escape than that of Ben Mayberry?

He drew a sigh of relief, but was far from congratulating himself with the belief that his danger was over. While it was hardly likely that the incident described would be repeated, yet the enemies were so close that he was imprisoned for an indefinite time, with the possibility of being discovered when he ventured to leave, even if he waited until nightfall.

The minutes wore away with wearying slowness. A watch was a rare curiosity in our early days, and the father of George Hardin was the only one in the

two families who owned such a treasure. Thus the young Kentuckian had no method of telling the passage of time except by mental calculation. He was confident that he lay in his cramped position for fully two hours after the disappearance of the moccasins before he ventured to move a muscle. By that time, he was in such a state of discomfort that he could bear it no longer. He hitched along until almost in the passage. Since it was impossible that his enemies should have retained their places near him during all that time (for there was no conceivable reason for doing so), he felt that it was running no risk for him to move into the opening, where he stretched his limbs and yawned with a feeling of unspeakable relief. Then he rolled over once or twice, like a horse when his harness is removed, and was himself again.

"Gracious!" he murmured, "that does a fellow good; if I could have a run of half a mile or so, I should be a new person."

Slowly and with infinite care he raised his head until he attained his former position and peered around him. The scrutiny revealed nothing, and he convinced himself that there was reason to hope that the two had left, for since they were nowhere in sight, it looked as if they had given up the search.

Had only himself been concerned, Ben Mayberry would have resolutely remained where he was until

the sun had gone down and night was fully come, but he chafed at the delay, and not unnaturally magnified the importance of his mission. He believed in his nervous condition, though the presumption was preposterous, that if he failed to reach and notify Major Croghan of his peril, he and his garrison would be cut off to a man.

"I must make the venture," was his resolute decision, "for there is too much depending on me to think only of myself."

It will be recalled that the place where the youth had taken refuge was on the margin of the stony portion, so that he had but a brief distance to go to reach the open wood where travelling was easy. If he could succeed in darting among the trees unseen, it would be in time to complete his mission, and he was certain that the greatest danger would then be behind him.

Not daring to raise his head, he crept along the narrow passage, his chin almost upon his knees, until he was at the extreme outer boundary of the mass of rocks and boulders. The way seemed open, but he hesitated until he could gather his energies for the dash to cover.

Before doing so, he thrust his head forward to scrutinize the boundary of the stony section, and, as he did so, he saw the Shawanoe warrior standing less than a rod distant, resting on his rifle, whose

stock was on the ground, while he was looking steadily in the direction of the wood, his profile being once more presented to view. To this fact alone was due Ben's escape from discovery.

Had he tried the dash he would have been shot down or captured before he could have gone twenty steps. It was a terrifying lesson to him, but with that coolness which rarely deserted him, he moved backward until it was safe to turn his face the other way, when he never paused until he was again in his old quarters.

"Whew!" he muttered; "it could n't have been much closer than that; they will wait here until dark, and maybe longer. There 's no doubt of that, but, luckily, it will soon be night."

In truth, the sun was already low in the sky, proving that he had been in hiding longer than he suspected. He was determined, in the face of his narrow escape, to repeat his attempt as soon as darkness settled in the woods.

"All I ask is a good start," was his thought, "for no Indian can trail a person when there is no sun in the sky, and that reminds me."

It was characteristic of the young Kentuckian that as he lay in a position somewhat less cramped than before, that he drew forth what remained of his luncheon and demonstrated his fine appetite by devouring the last crumb.

"Now I shall have to do some travelling to save myself from starvation," was his grim thought; "I 'll be hungry enough when I get to the fort, but what 's the use of a fellow going hungry when he 's got provisions in his clothes?"

Naturally he was thirsty, but had to content himself with the promise that he would drink dry the first spring or brook he reached after emerging from his uncomfortable quarters.

"Young men like us must n't mind such little things," was his philosophical conclusion; "if Kenton was here he would laugh at me. I hope poor George is in better quarters than I," he added, with a shrinking heart, as his musings returned to his missing comrade; "if he is alive he must be worried about me."

While his thoughts were flitting hither and thither, Ben became aware that the faint glow in the passage was made by the moon instead of the sun. Night had come, and the hour was later than he had thought. He started, as if his conscience reproved him for his remissness, and crept out of his hiding-place more quickly than he would have done had it been earlier in the day. There being no shade over this spot, he was surprised, when looking in the direction of the woods, to observe how dark everything appeared. It was as if he was inclosed by a world of shadow, which, if he could enter it, would

screen him from the keenest eye that ever attempted to track a foe to his death.

Ben moved more hurriedly than before along the passage until he arrived at the point where he had turned back in such haste at sight of the Shawanoe on guard. There he paused and peered around and listened. The spot where the warrior had been standing was partly in shadow, but he had no fear that he was still there. Although the American Indian sometimes shows a patience like that of the Eskimo when waiting for the seal to appear through the air-hole in the ice, it was too much to believe this specimen capable of maintaining his position for all the time named. He was not there, though it was not impossible he was somewhere else equally dangerous to the youth, who could remain idle no longer.

Slowly assuming the upright posture, he cast one glance at the darkness among the trees, which seemed to be beckoning him to their protection, and then the break was made.

It was over in the space of two or three seconds. The sensation is indescribable when one is in constant expectation of receiving the bullet of an unseen enemy, or when he suspects the foe is awaiting just ahead with upraised tomahawk to sink into his brain. Under the impulse of the strange terror, Ben kept on after passing among the trees, until he had collided with several trunks and been lifted almost

off his feet by the obtrusion of a number of branches across his line of flight. Finally he paused with the certainty that the daring essay had been successful. He was in the forest, where for many hours he was safe against the pursuit of any biped that ever lived.

But with the glow of thankfulness that suffused his frame came a number of reflections which were anything but comforting. Ten hours had passed since he had left Fort Meigs, and he was still within five miles of his starting-point. It was his intention to continue travelling through the night, but his progress must of necessity be slow, when he would have to feel his way, as may be said, with the constant liability to go astray, though he was hopeful that the latter would not cause any real trouble.

"If nothing has happened to Perkins and George, they must both be a good deal farther on the road than I, but if they have met with any misfortune, it will be all up with Major Croghan and his men. Heaven protect them!"

The keenest physical sensation with the young Kentuckian just then was his thirst, and when ere long his foot splashed into a small stream, he did his best to carry out the promise he had made himself when eating his lunch among the rocks. Without any fastidiousness, he lay down and drank until he could hold no more. Then with a sigh of enjoyment, he rose to his feet.

"It 's worth going without water for a day or two for the sake of such a drink as that. I must hurry up, for I have a much bigger load to carry than before I lay down and drank up nearly all there is in that stream."

The round, full moon gave more help than he expected. While most of the wood was wrapped in profound gloom, yet there were places where some of the rays splintered through and aided him to keep his bearings. Now and then when he struck a place where the moonlight had full power he looked at his compass, and was gratified in every instance to find that his course was about due east, his deviation being so slight that there was scarcely any need of correction. This of itself was an achievement, for when a person is lost in the woods, or is travelling at night without the help of landmarks or guides, he finds it almost impossible to prevent travelling in a circle, and eventually coming back to his starting point. That Ben Mayberry effectually guarded against this tendency was only another proof of the excellence of the training received at the hands of Simon Kenton, the greatest scout of them all.

When the youth heard a crashing among the trees on his left he gave it scarce heed, for the peculiarity of the sound told him that it was made by some quadruped, most likely another bear, and he had no

time to bother with such trifles. But for the danger of running into tree trunks and obtruding limbs, he would have kept up a loping trot for several hours.

As nearly as he could judge, he had gone a half dozen miles farther when he once more reached a broad, natural clearing, something like the one that had delayed him, though it was comparatively free from rocks and boulders. It extended farther to the right and left than the former, and he paused a moment in doubt whether to proceed directly across or to flank it, and thus escape discovery from any foe in the vicinity.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed to himself; "those chaps can't be everywhere; I must get ahead as fast as possible."

So, without further ado, he began striding across the clear space, the distance to the other side being barely a hundred paces. There seemed little risk in the course, but before he had gone half-way, the young Kentuckian regretted it, and would have turned back had it been possible to gain anything by so doing. But he hurried on, and was within a few rods of the other side, when a voice called from the line of shadow:

"Halt! or I 'll shoot!"

Ben halted, but who shall describe his feelings when he recognized the voice as that of his old comrade, George Hardin?

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE LAKE.

BEN MAYBERRY would not have been more startled had the sharp summons been uttered by the Shawanoe warrior or the half-breed Wallah, from whom he had fled, but the shock was that of delight, for there was no mistaking the voice of his old friend, George Hardin, who, afraid of a misunderstanding, stepped from the ribbon of shadow that bordered the clearing into full view.

"Are you glad to see me, Ben?"

"Glad to see you?" repeated the happy youth, rushing forward, dropping his rifle, and throwing his arms about the neck of his comrade in a transport of pleasure; "I was never so happy in all my life. I feared I should never see you again."

"And I felt the same about you, though I knew that if any one could take care of himself in this dangerous country, you were the person."

"And you have shown that you did as well as I; thank heaven!"

"So say I."

The young Kentuckian picked up his gun, and

the two walked to the shadow on the edge of the wood where they paused. There was no reason to believe any of their enemies were in the immediate vicinity, and they talked freely.

"How is it," asked Ben, "that you are so far from the spot where we parted from each other?"

"I hated to give up my hunt for you, but felt it was my duty to make all haste to Fort Stephenson with the message of General Smith. I suppose that is the reason why *you* are here?"

"Yes; I prowled around the place for awhile, but could n't come upon any sign of you; so I made up my mind to push on and then to come back and make a hunt. I hoped to have Kenton, or some of our friends, to help me."

"It proves, Ben, that it is always the safest to do your duty; if I had stayed by the creek, we should not have met, and more than likely I should have got into trouble, and it would have been the same with you, but here we are. Did you hear the signal I made to you?"

"My action proved that I did."

"What did you think I meant?"

"What could I think but that it was a warning to me to stay where I was for the time and not to try to follow you over the log? What was it you saw?"

"I passed over the fallen tree, as you know, and

turned down stream. Just then a rustling in the undergrowth told me that some one else was near. It was a risky thing to do, but I knew you were gone unless you were warned, so I made the signal we agreed upon, and began stealing from the danger spot. To do that, I had to press farther into the wood and away from you."

"Did you see the stranger?"

"I caught a glimpse of him, and who do you suppose it was?"

"The half-breed, sometimes called 'One-Eyed.'"

"Wallah—yes, it was he. I slipped behind a tree just in time to escape him, for, you know that if one of us can see a scout among the trunks, he has the same chance of seeing us, and I was taking desperate chances."

"But Wallah claims to be a friend, and to be out on a scout for General Smith."

"I thought of all that, and would have called to him, had I not found out within the same minute that he had a Shawanoe with him."

"They must have been the same couple that came so near getting me."

And then Ben related his experience after separating from his friend.

"They struck my trail instead of yours, and I had a close call."

"I can't understand it; there I was tramping

around the woods almost within arm's reach of them, while you were on the other side of the creek and crossed at a point quite a way down stream, yet they never saw my footprints, but did yours."

"It was accidental, but there had been others moving around where you were, and the rumpled leaves did not show that the tracks were those of a shoe instead of a moccasin. I must have stepped upon the soft ground in some place and left so sharp a print that Wallah knew it at the first glance. We have learned one thing, George: Wallah is just what Kenton said,—a spy working for General Proctor."

"There is n't any doubt of that; had he gained the chance, he would have shot both of us on sight."

"I came near serving him in the same way, and think I should have done it but for that Shawanoe, who would have made it too hot for me."

"Well," said Hardin, "I kept edging away from the place until I was well out of their sight. Then I turned down stream, though a considerable distance from it, believing you would come over and try to reach the fort."

"That 's just what I did do, but our course did n't cross, or, if it did, neither found it out."

"I ventured to signal to you, but got no answer."

"We were too far apart for me to hear it; I gave up all hope of seeing you again until on my return

from the fort, and," added Ben, with a sigh, "I was afraid that we should never meet after all."

"I felt much the same way about you, though I guess I was the more hopeful, but Ben when are we to reach Major Croghan?"

"Never, if we keep this up."

Hardin stepped off a few paces into the full flood of moonlight and examined his pocket compass.

"We have been working too far south; strange that we should both make the same mistake; we must bear to the north; let 's be off."

Instead of walking in Indian file, which would have been the easier course, they kept beside each other, talking in low tones, with intervals of silence and listening. There was no reason to suspect they were near any of their enemies, and yet it was possible that some of them were in the neighborhood, for the treacherous Wallah had learned hours before that at least one white person was travelling through the forest from the direction of Fort Meigs to Fort Stephenson, and the cunning miscreant could scarcely fail to suspect his business. Not only he but his allies would do all they could to prevent the warning reaching Major Croghan ahead of the force that was on its way to attack the garrison. They had a long stretch of country to cover and might be miles distant, with the possibility however, that only a few rods separated the foes.

It has been explained that the task of travelling at night through an unfamiliar expanse of wilderness was anything but easy, and the progress made by the youths was anything but satisfactory to their impatient natures. The obtruding limbs brushed their faces, and the outstretched hand did not always give notice of what was in their path. Once Hardin took a header over a fallen tree, and his companion with that liveliness of spirits natural to him, laughed heartily and silently, but the joke was against him when a boulder only a few inches in height caught his toe and sent him sprawling, despite his frantic effort to save himself. Had the circumstances been different, they would have given up the work and lain by until they had the light of the sun to help them.

With grim pluck, however, they kept at it until they knew the greater part of the night was gone and they had placed a goodly number of miles behind them. The extent covered may have been much less than they desired, but it counted, and might prove enough to decide the question of success or failure.

"Well, I declare!"

The exclamation was uttered in an undertone by Hardin, who, happening to be one or two paces in advance of his companion, came upon a body of water that brought both to an abrupt halt. It was

not a stream such as had checked them the preceding day, but appeared to be a pond or small lake, several hundred feet in width, and extending beyond their range of vision on the right and left. Interposing directly across their line of advance, it looked as if they had but the one way of continuing their journey, which was by crossing the stretch of water.

"I wonder how far this reaches," was the questioning remark of Ben; "if it is a lake, as it seems to be, it can't be very far to one end of it; shall we turn to the right or left?"

Recalling that they had been trending southward, Hardin replied:

"Let 's try the left; that will bring us nearer the right course to reach the fort."

As he spoke, he made the change indicated, with his comrade at his heels, neither forgetting the need of precaution in their every movement. Naturally, they did not suppose they would have to go far before reaching the upper terminus of the body of water, around which they could readily pass and continue their journey to the post that was still a long way in advance; but, to their astonishment, at the end of half an hour there were no signs of a narrowing of the lake, of which they had never heard. They halted again.

"I wonder if this is a part of Lake Erie," said

Ben; "if it is, we shall be a good deal older before we see the other side."

"That is impossible," replied his companion, who knew the other was jesting; "but it looks to me as if the best thing for us to do is to swim across; it is not far, and there 's no saying how much farther we shall have to tramp to pass around it."

Ben looked to the southward.

"It is a pity we did not go that way, but we have come so far we have no time to do it now."

It was a serious question, and they stood for some minutes debating it. The swim was considerable, but they had no fear, and began to prepare themselves by fastening their heavy guns to their backs, with the stocks protruding as far as possible, so as to protect the charges from the water. Before, however, the venture was made, they were checked by a surprising incident.

The moon was now so far over in the sky that the shadow extended a considerable distance from the shore on which they were standing, while the opposite bank was clearly revealed. It was Hardin who first detected something moving, whose identity for some minutes he could not make out. He touched the arm of his companion and whispered a warning to him. Though both were screened by the shadow, they instinctively recoiled, as if afraid of being dis-

covered by their enemies, some of whom were evidently on the other side.

While watching and wondering, they were astonished to observe a small Indian canoe put out from the fringe of undergrowth and head toward them. Two persons were in it, one of whom plied the long Indian paddle with a quiet deliberation that showed they were under no fear that any danger threatened them.

Neither youth spoke, but, knowing they were screened from view, they attentively studied the approaching craft and its inmates, which followed a line so exact that a meeting was inevitable unless a change of relative position took place. When the canoe was half-way across, the young men recognized the occupants as Wallah, the one-eyed half-breed, and the Shawanoe who had caused them so much trouble the day before. Fate seemed to have ordered that the couple should still harass our friends.

"We can't miss," whispered Ben Mayberry; "let 's pick off both."

Hardin was no less inclined to adopt this summary course, but hesitated through fear that others of their enemies were near. It impressed both as curious that the two should have reached the other side of the lake ahead of them, and their course in turning back in the canoe was inexplicable.

"Wait a little," said Hardin, observing that his companion had "unshipped" his weapon and was about to bring it to a level; "there may be others near."

"What of it? We can keep out of their way."

"Hold on, Ben; we must n't do anything rash; we shall have to shift our own quarters."

This was self-evident, and they carefully moved among the undergrowth until several rods distant from the point at which the boat was heading. Then they stopped and watched their foes.

The Shawanoe was seated at the stern, facing the shore toward which he was drawing near. His rifle lay across his knees, and so far as the paint on his countenance permitted one to see in the moonlight, he was as calm and imperturbable as if posing for a picture. The Wyandot half-breed also faced the shore he was drawing near, and propelled the canoe by dipping his long, ashen paddle first on one side and then on the other. Such frail craft are easily moved, and the effort was too gentle to suggest work.

Had Ben Mayberry and George Hardin chose to bring their guns to their shoulders, they could have slain the miscreants without the shadow of a doubt. The young Kentuckian was eager to do so, but his companion refused to join him in the act, and Ben was too prudent to incur the risk alone. It would

have been hard for Hardin to explain his self-restraint, and could he have foreseen the events of the next few hours, he would have been more anxious than his friend to give the wretches their full dues.

Ben lowered his weapon with a muttered protest and watched the couple, who were now on the edge of the band of shadow that put out from the western bank. They could be dimly seen as they left the canoe and drew it up the bank, where there was no danger of its being swept away by the action of the water. Rather curiously, neither spoke, but plunged among the trees and picked their way through the bushes to the westward. In the profound stillness their movements could be heard, for they made no effort to suppress the slight noise caused by brushing against the limbs and undergrowth. In a few minutes the stillness was as profound as before.

An idea came to Ben.

"What 's the use of swimming when there 's a boat waiting for us?"

It was a tempting chance, though manifestly a dangerous one. Nothing was more likely than that Wallah and the Shawanoe would return and use the canoe. Should they do so, while the youths were in it, the late situation would be reversed, and our friends would be at the mercy of their foes; but, on the other hand, it was not probable that they would

show up for a little while—at any rate not before Ben and George could make use of the unexpected convenience thrown in their way.

"We 'll do it," was the reply of Hardin, who took but a minute to reach the spot where the craft lay. It was shoved softly back into the water, and George picked up the paddle, while Ben seated himself at one end after the manner of the Shawanoe who had been ferried across under their eyes.

Now that the risky course had been entered upon, Hardin took no chances that could be avoided. Instead of heading directly out into the lake, he silently paddled for a hundred feet along the shore, keeping well within the line of shadow. Then when he thought he had gone far enough, he turned the prow outward and headed for the other shore.

Even this precaution would not have availed had the others returned before the canoe reached the farther side, but it added a slight degree of protection to the daring act. Ben kept his head turned while he scanned the shore they were leaving, though a score of Shawanoes might have approached without detection, since he and George were effectually screened against discovery when the situation was reversed; but under the vigorous propulsion of the muscular arms of Hardin, the canoe skimmed like a swallow over the placid surface, and in a briefer while than would be supposed,

glided into the line of protecting shadow, and the youths drew a sigh of relief. A minute later both had stepped ashore.

"George," said the young Kentuckian in a guarded undertone, "you remember my canoe with which we used to cross the Ohio?"

"Yes."

"And how some of the Shawanoes cut and hacked it to pieces?"

"Of course."

"Why not return the compliment?"

"I don't suppose that Wallah and his companion were the guilty ones."

"What of that? When a white man does an injury to an Indian, the warrior evens up things by banging away at the first pale face he can draw a bead on. We don't know that the couple own this craft, but it belongs to some of them, so it 's all the same to us."

"I 'm agreeable."

It took them but a few minutes with their sharp knives to slit and carve the canoe so that it could never again be of any use. The youths contemplated their work with no little satisfaction.

"I only hope the Shawanoe had something to do with cutting up *my* boat," said Ben, "for then he 'll understand what this means."

"There is n't much likelihood of that; it

was a good many miles from here, and two years ago."

"But these Shawanoes are mousing everywhere, and——"

The speaker did not need the warning "Sh!" of his companion to cease the words which were uttered in such low tones that the sentence might have been finished without danger of being overheard.

It was the sound of something moving among the undergrowth near at hand that gave both a start. The Indians, if such they were, would be upon them before they could get out of their way; but the next moment they knew the noise was not made by any of their enemies. Some sort of a wild animal was making his way to the edge of the lake within a few feet of them. It was easy to locate him, and while watching the spot where he was to appear, a bear lumbered into sight and began lapping the water after the manner of a dog.

"I 'll bet that 's the same animal that I met near the creek; it must belong to Wallah, and is following him."

"That can't be," replied Hardin, "for that creature was killed; I saw his body in the wood; bears seem to be plentiful in this part of the world."

Possibly the brute heard the soft whispering so near him, since the youths did not take pains to

prevent it, for he turned his head and looked toward them. It is hardly to be supposed that he saw them as they shrank among the shadows, but, if he did, he gave them no further attention. Stepping into the water, he sank until only his snout and the upper part of his head were visible, when, with a grunting snort, he began swimming across.

Ben Mayberry was amused.

"Can it be that he was looking for the canoe to paddle to the other side?"

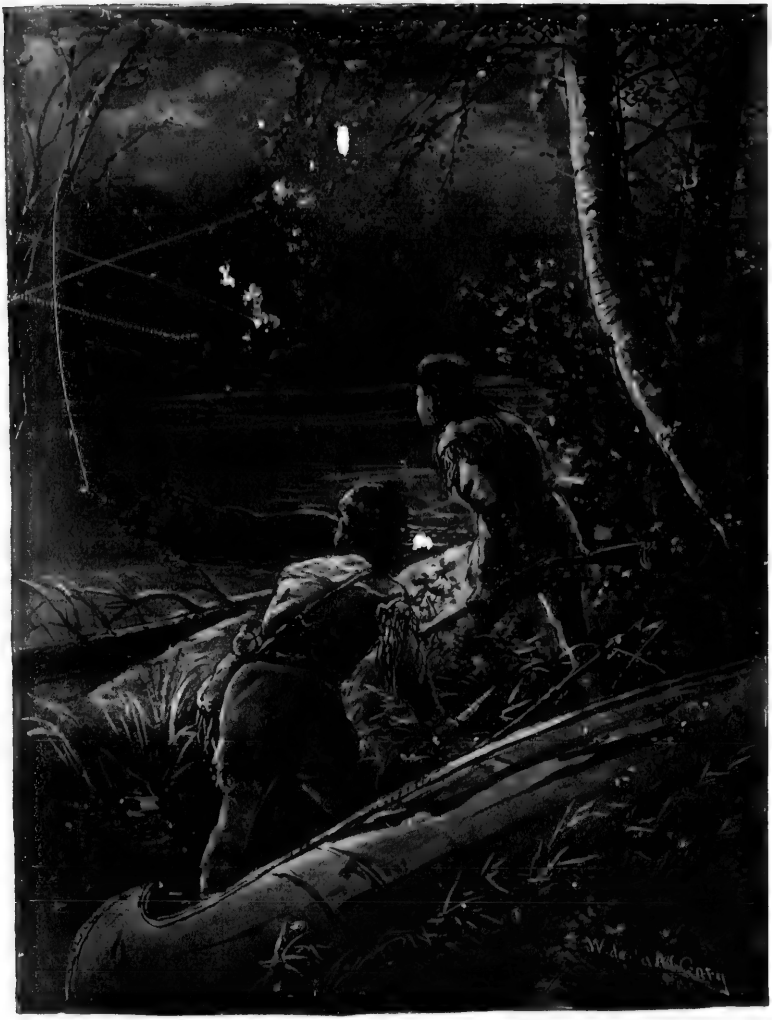
"If he was, he spent little time in the hunt."

"If Wallah and his friend meet the bear, will they think it was he that chewed up their canoe?"

"If they examine its remains, they won't."

"Will they suspect *we* did it?"

"Either we or some one who does n't love them," was the reply of Hardin; "but come, we are loitering again, and there are a good many miles to be passed before we reach Fort Stephenson, and the night must be well along."



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CHAPTER XIV.

SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT.

BEN MAYBERRY and George Hardin made an interesting discovery within ten minutes after leaving the side of the lake. Instead of picking their way blindly through the gloomy wood, they were following a well-marked path. Without any thought or intention on their part, they had stepped into it, and found the travelling comparatively easy as contrasted with that which had delayed them since set of sun.

But it could not be said whether this was an advantage or not. The fact that it was a path was proof that it was used by others, and, whoever such parties might be, they could not be looked upon as friends. The trail was probably made by settlers long before the present war, but with a powerful army in the neighborhood and the hostile Indians moving back and forth, it would be a perilous thing for an American to pass over it.

And yet the youths chafed so much under their tardy progress that they decided to make use for a time of the facility. They could proceed so stealth-

ily as not to betray themselves, while by alertness they ought to detect the approach of any foe before he discovered them.

The trail was so narrow that the two were now obliged to walk in Indian file. Hardin took the lead, with his comrade so near that he could almost reach him by extending his arm. Conversation ceased, for there was not only no need of it, but it was dangerous in the highest degree.

The night was far advanced and there was no time to throw away. The messengers had counted upon being many miles farther over the road, and could only succeed in their mission by improving their time. Hardin kept one hand extended in front, for the tree branches were continually obtruding across the path, and some of the limbs were thick enough to hurt when they switched his face or thrust themselves under his chin. Acting thus as a guide for his companion, who was so near, he saved him considerable annoyance.

The profound stillness was not the least impressive feature of the strange scene. At times the hollow silence was like the far-away murmur of the ocean. Then the bark of a wolf sounded at one side, and once the faint report of a gun stole through the arches from a point that seemed miles distant. Amid this deep solitude were human beings seeking one another's lives, just as they have always done

and still do in the homes of civilization. There were hundreds of men, many of their own race, who would have eagerly embraced the chance to lay the valiant youths low, for no other reason than that they were doing all they could to save a gallant little band from massacre. So goes the world forever.

It was a cause of satisfaction when the youths knew that the path had enabled them to traverse a number of miles in far less time than they expected, and they were still pressing onward when Ben Mayberry bumped against his friend, because the latter without warning had come to an abrupt stop.

"Did you hear anything?" asked Hardin, turning his head part way round, so as to speak over his shoulder.

"No; did you?"

"I thought so, but I 'm not sure."

Like a couple of statues the friends held their pose for two or three minutes, during which no sound reached them except the soft sighing of the wind through the branches. The moon was now far down in the sky, and nowhere could be perceived the first arrowy beam shooting through the dense vegetation.

"I guess it was nothing," finally ventured Ben.

"Likely enough," returned the guide, who resumed his walking at a more rapid pace than before,

for he begrudged even the few minutes that had been wasted. Not wishing to have another collision, and believing that danger was as likely to come from one direction as the other, the young Kentuckian fell back a few paces and gave his attention to the rear, leaving his companion to look to the front. By turning his head sideways, Ben was confident he could detect the approach of any one from that direction, provided the stranger held no suspicion that the parties were in front of him and took unusual care to prevent discovery.

Hardin was sure that the position of peril belonged to hin because if there was any one approaching from the rear, it was not likely he would travel faster than themselves, and therefore would not overtake them. A half-mile farther, and he stopped with the same suddenness as before, warning his companion by a low, sibilant sound to be on his guard, since they could detect only the faintest outlines of each other when almost in contact. Ben understood him, and came stealthily forward.

"What is it, George?"

"I tell you, there 's some one else in the path."

"If it 's the one you heard before, he must be going in our direction, or we should have met him."

"Is it all quiet at the rear?"

"So far as I can tell."

"Listen!"

But the attentive ears detected nothing more than the almost inaudible rustling of the leaves. One recourse remained to them. Hardin knelt down and pressed his ear to the ground. In a second he was on his feet again.

"There 's somebody else going over this path; I am sure of it," he whispered.

Without replying, Ben did as his friend had just done, and instantly perceived he was right. He caught faintly but distinctly the sound, not of an animal, but of a man walking over the trail in front of them. Lifting his head, the youth heard nothing, proving that the stranger was not very near. Then he again put his ear to the ground.

The peculiar throbbing came to him, but it was perceptibly fainter than before. Whoever was using the trail was going in the same direction with themselves, and consequently away from them.

"You 're right, George, but if the fellow does n't stop and wait for us, or we don't go any faster than we are now going, we need n't pay any attention to him."

"It looks as if we are travelling at the same rate, for it must have been he that I heard a few minutes ago. We can keep a lookout for him, unless he happens to learn that we are behind him."

The youths resumed their journey, Hardin still in the lead. They kept the same space between them and were as alert and watchful as ever, because of

which fact Ben signalled to his companion to wait a moment while he resorted to the artifice he had used before. George kept his feet while the other knelt just behind him.

"It 's somebody else this time," remarked the young Kentuckian, raising his head, but remaining on his hands and knees.

"How can you know that?"

"Because the sound comes from the rear."

George was on the ground in a twinkling.

"You are right; let us step aside until he passes; it sounds to me as if there is only one of them."

It was proof of the impatience of the young men that they hurriedly walked some distance farther before silently stepping from the trail and crouching in the impenetrable gloom.

They were not kept waiting long. In a few minutes a footfall was heard as if a man was walking fast, though not running. The youths tried to pierce the darkness as the stranger came opposite, but failed to catch so much as a shadowy glimpse of his figure, which passed in a twinkling The two kept their places as the footfalls rapidly grew fainter and soon died out. Then they rose to their feet.

"It seems curious," remarked Ben, in his guarded manner, "that there should be only one Indian."

"You don't know that it is an Indian, and if it is, there may be others not far away."

"Let 's be off again; if he puts his ear to the ground, as we did, he will detect and wait for us."

Nevertheless they lost no more time through this possible danger. After going a short distance, they applied the test, and did not know whether to be alarmed by the fact that they heard nothing like a footstep. Again the report of a gun sounded from the left as before, but it was a long way off, and they gave it no attention.

All of a mile was passed, when Ben for the third time after the last start used the better conductor of sound, while George as before awaited his report.

"Do you hear anything?"

"Yes; there are more of them."

Hardin was on his knees again.

"We seem to be running into a nest of our enemies; it looks as if we shall have to leave the path altogether; let 's go a little farther before waiting for them to go by."

A little way farther they reached a more favorable spot, for the trees were open, and a few of the moonbeams found their way to the trail. Carefully ensconcing themselves in the dense gloom at the right, they stooped down and waited. They had the satisfaction of now knowing that whoever went by would be partly revealed, for he must pass through the glinting moonlight.

The sounds which soon fell upon their ears showed

that more than one person was drawing near, and they were doing so at a faster gait than a walk. With feelings which perhaps may be imagined, they suddenly caught a glimpse of a man going at a loping trot over the trail, as if there were no such thing as projecting limbs or obstructions, and, fleeting as was the sight of him, the youths recognized the fellow as Wallah, the one-eyed Wyandot half-breed.

Close behind him loped his Shawanoe companion, the speed of the two being so similar that they maintained a distance of less than ten feet apart. They were hardly seen, when they glided from view, though the soft, rhythmic pounding of their moccasins reached the youths for several moments. Then they applied their ears to the ground; it was heard again, finally dying out altogether.

"Now, what can that mean?" asked Ben; "it looks to me as if those two scamps are chasing the one that went by ahead of them."

"If so, he does n't know it."

"Why not?"

"If he knew he had pursuers on his track, he would either run or turn off from the trail as we have done."

"It can't be they are friends, or they would have signalled to each other."

"*Who is the man in front?*"

It was a significant question, but neither youth could so much as guess his identity except that probably he belonged to their own race.

"Now if we were farther north, I should say it was Perkins, for you know the understanding was that he was to pass above Proctor while we took the course to the south. It must be another of the scouts."

"We are taking it for granted that the two are chasing the one, when we may be wrong. At any rate, if the first man is one of our scouts, he ought to be smart enough to find out the truth as we did."

"It is 'nt going to be such an easy job as we thought to get through to Fort Stephenson," said Ben.

"We have found it anything but easy ever since we started; it must be that Proctor or Tecumseh expects some such attempts as we are making, and he is taking every means to head us off."

It was certainly singular that after these striking occurrences the youths progressed for a full hour over the trail without hearing or seeing anything to cause alarm. They did not allow more than a few minutes to pass without pausing and holding an ear to the earth, but everything remained as profoundly quiet as if they were the only living persons within miles.

At the end of the time mentioned, they made the

discovery that the night was at an end. There was a gradual lightening of the gloom which could be due but to one cause. By-and-by the column-like trunks stood out in clearer view, and Hardin could see the branches in front of his face. The gray, misty light increased, until night fled away and the bright, life-giving sun was in the horizon.

" George, I 'm hungry," was the first remark of the young Kentuckian, as he drew up beside his guide.

" So am I, but what are we going to do about it? I ate every particle of my lunch yesterday afternoon."

" So did I; we shall have to wait until we reach Fort Stephenson, and that won't be for some time yet; how far do you fancy we have come ? "

Hardin removed his cap and ran his fingers thoughtfully through his curly hair, looking around at the trees as if searching for the answer among them.

" It is hard to tell, but I think we have covered half the distance."

" I am afraid it is less than that, but we have made good time since we came together, and we ought to be there early in the afternoon."

" So we shall, if we can keep clear of the Shawanoes and Wyandots. It strikes me it is about time for Wallah and his friend to turn up again."

Both glanced furtively around them, but they were alone. The path showed distinctly, and evidently at no distant day it had been freely used.

"There must be some settlers in this neighborhood," said Hardin; "Ohio has been a State for nearly a dozen years, and has lots of settlements and villages and some pretty fair-sized towns."

"Of course," replied Ben; "and this is a portion that has suffered little from the Indians, at least not since we can remember; I have never been as far north, and am therefore lost, but there are a good many of our countrymen in Ohio."

"And a good many who are not," said the young Ohioan, compressing his lips, while his gray eyes flashed; "but General Harrison will soon drive them out, and we must give him what help we can."

With which resolution, Hardin, having replaced his cap, strode off once more to the eastward. It will be remembered that the two had been travelling with hardly a stop during the whole of the night. They had excuse for being tired, and it cannot be denied that they felt the effects of the long tramp, but they did not intend to spare themselves. Rugged, strong, and blessed with perfect health, they were capable of keeping at it, despite their hunger and weariness. Exasperating delays had hindered them at first, but despite all, they had accomplished a creditable distance, and as both

agreed, they had strong hope of reaching Major Croghan in time to apprise him of his danger.

A little farther and the path was crossed by a rivulet of sparkling, clear water. They stooped and drank their fill from it, after which they bathed their faces and hands, and sat down on the leafy ground for a brief rest. They were but a few paces to the right of the trail, which was in plain view. The sun was above the horizon, and its glad light filled the forest with the promise of a day as clear and sultry as the previous one had been.

Hardin rose to his feet, yawned and looked around him with the keen scrutiny of a veteran woodsman, who does not allow a point to escape his vision.

"Ben, I may be wrong, but it looks to me as if the country is more open in front; what do you think?"

The young Kentuckian rose and looked searchingly in the direction indicated, and then toward other points of the compass.

"You are right; there is something ahead that is interesting."

He stepped back to the trail, and for the first time led the way. The trees in front grew more scattered, and, before they expected it, they emerged into a long stretch of cultivated land, where people were living, or had been up to a recent date.

But the sight was a sad one. The corn had been

trampled down, fruit trees hacked to the ground, the buildings burned, and devastation, wreck, and ruin were on every hand. Evidently the inviting spot had been visited by the Indians or some of the raiding parties of Proctor, who played sad havoc with all they saw. The soil that had been under cultivation numbered fully a score of acres, and where it was so fertile it would have yielded an abundant harvest had the spoiler remained away.

That his visit was recent was proven by the thin wreaths of blue smoke that were curling upward from the charred timbers of the nearest dwelling. Cattle, horses, fowls, and every living thing were missing. These all formed valuable booty to the enemy, who made it his practice to live off the country through which he was passing.

The youths stood for some minutes silently contemplating the melancholy scene. Here before their eyes was shown some of the barbarities of war and of the ruin wrought by the enemies of their beloved country. Their eyes flashed at the thought, and glad indeed would they have been for the opportunity of striking a lusty blow in defence of their afflicted neighbors, who were unfortunate enough to live within reach of those who knew naught of chivalry or mercy.

But as their eyes wandered over the pathetic scene, they rested upon something that interested and sur-

prised them. Beyond the smouldering ruins of the farmer's house and outbuildings was a second cabin, apparently that of a near neighbor of the first, which showed no appearance of injury. The low structure of logs was as firm as when it was completed, and the roof, walls, and doors were new and sound.

"That is curious," remarked Ben Mayberry, peering across the devastated fields; "why should they have spared one building and destroyed all the others, for the barn belonging to that one has been burned? Only the cabin itself is standing."

"Could it be the visitors set fire to it, and that the fire went out after they had gone, something as yours did after the visit of the Shawanoes two years ago?"

"It might be, but it does n't seem probable. Perhaps the man who lived there was a friend of the British, or made them think so."

"Can you see any persons around the buildings?"

The two climbed upon a stump to gain a better view, and, standing thus, they observed a number of interesting sights.

In the first place, they were unable to see a living creature or person near, though it might be that the family belonging to the place had taken refuge in the building in their fear of another visit from the marauders. If this were the fact, it suggested the hope to George and Ben of securing something in

the way of food by going to the cabin. If the occupants had fled, it was not unlikely they had left enough behind to furnish a partial meal at least.

But to go forward and enter the structure directly after the visit of the enemy, and especially upon the heels, as may be said, of the Shawanoe and half-breed, was so imprudent that they debated for a time whether to do so, and, while debating, they saw a man suddenly run toward the front door, jerk the latch-string, and dart inside. He must have secured the door behind him, for his action indicated that he was a fugitive from some foe who was pressing him hard. Furthermore, he was a white man, and his conduct left no doubt that he was beset by Indians, and that the alarmed spectators were about to witness a tragedy.

CHAPTER XV.

AT BAY.

THE action of the man who had dashed into the cabin was so significant, that Ben Mayberry and George Hardin changed their post of observation in order to prevent their own discovery by the assailants of the fugitive. The distance between them and the building was barely two hundred yards, sufficient for them to be noted by the parties clamoring for the life of the individual. The youths stepped down from the stump on which they had been standing and ran to the shelter of the wood directly behind them. There they could note everything that passed, though not so clearly as from the more elevated station.

The cabin was similar in structure to their own homes. It had a single front door, and a narrow window on each side, with two above. They could not see the rear or farther end, but the end toward them showed a single window. The probability was that there were two others at the rear.

For some minutes after the disappearance of the fugitive within the building, no sign of life showed on the outside, nor did the defender reveal himself.

"I wonder whether he is alone?" remarked Ben.

"Most likely; if he had companions, something would have been seen of them."

"Ah! do you see that?"

Unfortunately the builder of the cabin had left a group of a dozen trees or more within a short distance of the front of the building, as if he intended them for shade trees or for the convenience of his children, while the other portion of the land was cleared and cultivated. It was among these trees that the boys observed moving figures which did not require a second glance to identify as Indians in their war-paint. Evidently they had caught the white man at such disadvantage that he had no choice but to flee into the cabin, where he was ready to make the best defence possible.

While the youths were watching the Shawanoes, as undoubtedly they were, moving carefully among the trees and gradually working closer to the house, they saw a flash from the farther window, followed by the sharp report of a rifle and the screech of one of the assailants. The watchful defender had caught sight of one of his enemies and picked him off. The spectators did not see the victim, since he was hidden among the trees, but there could be no mistake about that wild cry which rang out in the morning air with more piercing distinctness than the sound of the weapon.

"Now they will make a rush while his gun is unloaded," was the comment of Hardin, who did not miss a point of the remarkable conflict.

But the rush was not made. Apparently the shot had taught them caution. When they were sure of their man, why should they incur unnecessary risk?

One—two—three reports came from the little group of trees. The Indians were firing through the windows, in the hope that a stray shot would reach the defender, but our young friends had no apprehension on that score. A person with his experience was too wise to expose himself to such danger.

"Why don't they attack at the rear?" asked Hardin.

"What good would that do them when there is no door, and the windows are too narrow to force their way through? They must enter by the front door, or stay outside."

As if in answer to George's question, the slightly muffled reports that reached them showed that there was firing on the other side of the cabin. Whether the man replied could not be told, but it was not likely any of the shots did execution. The curious battle must be decided under the eyes of the youths, who, as has been explained, saw only the front and one end of the building.

Some minutes of inaction followed. The assailants were evidently plotting new mischief, whose nature would soon reveal itself.

The revelation was startling. The Indians had secured a tree trunk, from which they had hacked most of the branches, leaving the stumps as handles, which were grasped by six or eight, equally divided so as to support the weight between the parties. The trunk was perhaps twenty feet in length, and formed the formidable battering-ram, for which it was intended.

It was an act of unusual daring on their part, when every one of the Shawanoes knew that to make the weapon effective, they must leave cover and place themselves in direct range of the defender, who had already proven his grim earnestness. He had been given time in which to reload his weapon, and was awaiting the moment that must quickly come.

A brief interval was spent in arranging matters, when the warriors issued from the protection of the grove, with the horizontal trunk between the two divisions, the ponderous end or stump portion, shorn of all branches, projecting several feet in front, while the tapering part terminated about the same distance beyond the two rear Indians. Propelled as it could be, its momentum must prove irresistible. Driven with united force against the

door, it would smash it from its hinges and open the way to the interior. This was what the redskins, bearing it between them, were bent upon doing.

When the party emerged from the edge of the grove fronting the house, they were walking slowly, this perhaps being necessary until they could disentangle themselves from their surroundings. But in the open their space grew more rapid, and very quickly the twinkling leggings showed they were trotting. Woe to the obstruction that got in the way of that wooden snout bearing down upon it!

Hardly half the distance was passed when a second flash darted this time from an upper window. The defender was on the alert, and awaited the precise moment when he could do the most effective execution. The foremost Shawanoe on the left made a curious bound—that is, directly to the right, the effect of which was still more singular. Instead of leaping in air or to the left where the space was clear, he lunged in the direction named, at the instant of uttering his death-shriek, and fell directly across the butt of the log, over which he hung like a garment dangling upon a clothes-line. The result was curious. His partner grasping the corresponding limb on the other side might have held on, had the stricken one merely collapsed without interfering with his work, but the sudden impact of the

limp body, the head of which struck him, caused him involuntarily to let go. His companions behind him had all they could do to support their part of the burden, but in an instant the help of two assistants was not only withdrawn, but the weight of one of them was added to the heavy load.

It was too much. Only the dexterity of the dusky gymnasts saved them from tumbling over one another, while every one released his hold, and the log dropped to the ground with a heavy thump, while the bearers scattered for cover like so many frightened partridges. They must have been relieved when they found themselves once more sheltered against the shots of the terrible white man.

The incident was another of the many illustrations of the grave disadvantage under which our ancestors labored on account of their clumsy weapons. Had the white man held one of the modern breech-loaders, he could have stood at the side of the narrow window where he had stationed himself, and picked off his assailants one after the other, with the result that not more than one or two would have escaped him. But the loading of a flint-lock was an awkward operation, which took many valuable seconds, and though the white man was an expert and did his work with surprising quickness, by the time he had poured the powder into the pan and was ready for business, not one of his enemies was within reach.

"George," said the young Kentuckian, "I feel like a coward standing here and looking at that fight without offering to help the poor fellow."

"And so do I, though as long as matters remain as they are, he does n't need any help."

"They won't remain as they are; he has shot two, if not more of them, and they will never let him escape, but they will keep at it till they get him."

"Let 's move around where we can do something for him."

In their anxiety to help the beleaguered white man the youths could not forget their own unfavorable situation. They were on the outside of the cabin, and must meet the assailants on even terms. Could there be any way of joining the one inside, the advantage would be decisive. Three persons on the defensive, and sheltered by the heavy logs, could stand off ten times as many assaliants. The young friends debated whether there was any means possible of joining the brave fellow, but were compelled to admit there was none. If he could be apprised of their presence, he might hold the door ready for a rush upon receiving a signal, but there was no way of opening communication with him without revealing themselves to the Shawanoes, who would make short work of their good intentions.

The hopelessness of their purpose so impressed them, that the youths paused when half the intervening distance was covered, and, carefully screening themselves, decided to wait for a brief while and watch for the opportunity which for the time was denied them.

The foremost warrior who had been stricken down by the shot of the defender lay on his face with outstretched arms in full view, and less than fifty feet from the door. This fact led his comrades to resort to an artifice that was surprising to the young scouts who were attentively watching events. On the edge of the grove appeared one of the Shawanoes waving a white handkerchief over his head—an article which he had probably stolen from some of his white victims, for the reader does not need to be reminded that the American Indian had never been addicted to the use of the convenience named.

"A flag of truce!" exclaimed Ben Mayberry, in a whisper; "what does it mean?"

"They have something to say to the white man."

"More likely they want to take away the body of that warrior."

"I don't see why they should; it is as much good lying there as farther back among the trees, and they can afford to wait until the fight is over."

"Then it is meant to hide some trick."

"That is more likely; we shall soon know."

The Shawanoe who had taken upon himself the dangerous task must have felt misgivings, for he held his place for several minutes, partly concealing his body while his extended hand slowly swung the linen to and fro, as if afraid to expose his body to the unerring aim of the man who was fighting for his life. Rarely, or never, does the American Indian pay the slightest regard to a flag of truce, and why should this one expect his enemy to show it any consideration?

It is impossible to guess the thoughts of the white man, who could not fail to observe the appeal, but the fact that he kept out of sight, and offered nothing in the nature of a reply made it seem as if he held the emblem at its true value. He was not to be tempted into an exposure of himself by any artifice of his treacherous foes.

If the action which the Shawanoe indulged was singular, that which followed was more so. Evidently he concluded to accept the irresponsiveness of the white man as favorable, for he now stepped into full view, stood motionless a moment, industriously waving the handkerchief, and then, as if all misgiving had vanished, walked out into the open with his gaze on the front of the building, apparently watching for the appearance of the one who was within.

When he reached the body of his fallen comrade, Ben and George expected to see him stoop over, and, lifting it from the ground, move back among the trees with the burden; but he gave it no attention, and they observed that he was several paces to one side of the inanimate form, as if he felt no interest in it. His painted face was still turned upward, his rifle grasped in his left hand, while the right continued to swing the flag of truce over his head.

"He wants to open communication with the chap inside," whispered Ben.

"It looks so, but he ought to have tried it before the fighting began."

The stillness was so perfect that the youths from their hiding-place heard every word uttered, the Shawanoe being sufficiently acquainted with the English tongue to make himself understood.

"Broder, hear what me say!" called the warrior, slightly raising his voice, as if that would make his words plainer.

There could be no doubt that the individual to whom this appeal was addressed understood the call, but he waited for it to be repeated before making response. Finally he demanded in a gruff voice:

"Wal, what do you want?"

"Broder, s'render—Shawanoe love broder—not hurt him."

"Why the mischief then don't you go away and let me alone?"

It sounded as if the words came from one of the upper windows, but if so, the speaker took care not to reveal himself.

"Shawanoe mistake—don't know broder."

This was not very clear, but the man to whom it was addressed must have been amused, for his chuckle was plainly heard.

"Do you know me now? What 's my name?"

"Broder, s'render," repeated the warrior, irrelevantly.

"If I surrender, what will you do with me?"

"Take to Gen'l Proctor—he no hurt; take to Tecumseh—he like white man; he no hurt."

"If you will bring Tecumseh here, I will surrender to him, for he 's the only white Indian alive. Fetch him here."

"He good way off—he with Gen'l Proctor—no time to come."

"Wal, then, I 'll see you hanged before I 'll surrender; it is true that there 's no one but myself in this cabin, but I have plenty of ammunition, and I 've showed you that I know how to shoot my rifle. Why did n't you ask me to give up before you began shooting at me?"

"Brave broder—don't know him—won't hurt broder," was the rather vague response.

"Suppose I refuse to surrender, what will you do?" asked the white man, banteringly.

"Den we take you—we tie to tree—we set fire—burn."

"Wal, you 've got to catch me before you can do that; I won't surrender."

"Den we burn you—like Col'nel Crawford," and the indignant messenger dropped the hand that held the flag of truce to his side, turned on his heel and strode toward the grove from which he had come.

The rules of civilized warfare would not have justified that which followed, but the circumstances did so. The man who made the defiant reply was not deceived by the artifice of his enemies. The threat of putting him to the torture if he refused to give himself up would be carried out if he voluntarily came forth and handed them his gun. He had seen the thing done in his experience, and was well aware that the most solemn pledge of the average American Indian was without any binding effect upon them.

They had counted upon securing him without loss of life to themselves, but two of their number had already fallen, and it looked as if it would cost them more before they could gather him in. Hence the trick of the flag of truce, fully understanding which, the white man deliberately levelled

his rifle, while the angry Shawanoe was walking away, and shot him dead in his tracks.

"Good!" exclaimed the pleased Hardin; "I was afraid they would persuade him to give in, but he knows too much for that."

But all the same, the cunning Shawanoes did outwit the brave fellow who defied them.

There was a meaning in the pretended flag of truce, which neither the man nor the youths suspected. It cannot be supposed that the messenger had any expectation that the single defender would accept the pledges made him, and place himself willingly in their power, but he did hope he would refrain from firing upon the emblem which his own people held sacred. But, whether he did or not, the interview must necessarily occupy several minutes, during which the attention of the white man would be held at the front, and he would not suspect what was going on at the rear of the cabin; and that was the primal object of the proceeding.

Ben Mayberry and George Hardin still held their advanced position, hoping that some way would present itself by which they could strike a blow for their unknown friend, but as matters stood, the first act on their own part was certain to precipitate their destruction without benefiting the other.

"There does n't seem to be any one at the rear

of the house," said Ben; "let 's see whether there is n't some chance there to do something."

"If he can stand them off till night," remarked Hardin, doubtfully; "and we can manage to let him know we are here, we may help him."

"But night is a long way off, and we must be at Fort Stephenson before that time or give up——"

He abruptly caught the arm of his companion, who needed not the reminder, for both saw a terrifying sight at the same instant. A mass of smoke rose above the roof of the cabin, coming from a fire that had been kindled on the other side. While the bearer of the flag of truce was holding the attention of the white man at the front, another party, who had fully prepared everything, slipped noiselessly forward, each carrying a bundle of dried twigs and limbs, which were as silently heaped against the side of the cabin. There was enough fuel to make a pile several feet high, and it was adjusted with infernal cunning. Then, when all was ready, one of the redskins stooped down and with flint and steel struck several sparks which quickly communicated with the inflammable material. Pausing until everything was going right, they skurried among the trees and gleefully watched matters.

It was at this moment that the crack of the white man's rifle and the screech of his victim announced what had occurred at the front of the house, and

proved that the party at the rear had timed their work to perfection.

The defender soon caught the smell of smoke, and for the first time comprehended how cleverly he had been out-generalled. He had the grim satisfaction of knowing that he had exacted a heavy penalty for the treachery of his foes, but the crisis had come with unexpected suddenness. It was now a choice of remaining in the cabin and being burned to death, or of risking all on another dash for freedom. He chose the latter.

CHAPTER XVI.

THROUGH ON TIME.

THE white man showed no hesitation, now that he was compelled to choose between the two frightful expedients. A more painful death than that of being burned to a cinder in the blazing cabin is hardly conceivable. He had no means of checking the flames which were roaring with increasing fury and would make the interior a blazing furnace within the next five minutes.

Deliberately descending the ladder at the rear of the upper room, he strode across the lower floor, where he could hardly breathe because of the suffocating smoke, and made for the door. He still held his loaded rifle in hand, for under no circumstances would he willingly part with that. Removing the ponderous bolt and lifting the latch, he drew the heavy structure a few inches inward and peered out. He saw the Shawanoes awaiting his coming, and knew that others were at the rear of the building.

Suddenly swinging the door wide open, he uttered a defiant yell, and, leaping outside, started on a

dead run for the spot where the youths were watching with bated breath the thrilling sight. It was the best thing for the man to do, for he had gone hardly a dozen steps when it was all over, and he was beyond any possible suffering at the hands of the dusky wretches, who were thus robbed of their expected delight by the shots which they were compelled to fire to prevent the escape of the fleet-footed fugitive.

When the poor fellow turned his pale, determined face toward the spot where our young friends were in hiding, they recognized him as Jim Perkins, the scout who had started the previous day upon the same mission as themselves. Before he had accomplished half the distance, he had fallen in the discharge of his duty, adding his name to the long list of unknown heroes to whom our country owes a debt that can never be repaid.

It was a shocking discovery to Ben and George, who rather curiously had not only failed to identify the scout when they saw him run from cover and dodge into the cabin, but had overlooked the possibility of its being their old friend.

It will be understood that the youths themselves were in a most perilous situation, from which they must quickly extricate themselves or be lost. So near were their enemies that with all the woodcraft of the young men it would have been impossible to

do this, had not the attention of the Shawanoes been absorbed for a few minutes by the incident just described. Quick to take advantage of the favorable situation, Ben and George withdrew with infinite pains deeper into the wood, until finally a point was reached where they could breathe freely and speak to each other.

"Poor Jim!" said Hardin, in a choking voice; "I never suspected it was he; what a pity we could do nothing to help him, but we had no earthly chance."

"We had a dozen chances, and were fools not to use them," was the bitter exclamation of Ben Mayberry.

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished George.

"That was Jim who hurried over the trail last night behind us, and we stepped out of the way to let him pass."

"But we did n't know it at the time."

"But we knew it was Wallah and the Shawanoe that were chasing him: there was enough moonlight at that spot to show both, and we ought to have shot them; it was a wicked oversight, and I shall never forgive myself, not only for that neglect but for throwing away my chance to shoot them on the lake, when they could n't help themselves."

Hardin made no reply, for he shared the remorse,

if it may be termed that, over the undeserved chivalry he had shown their enemies. He keenly regretted it, but regrets could now do no good. The youths stood in silence for several minutes, their reflections of the most distressing nature. They had known Jim Perkins for several years for a brave, honest, skilful scout, whose death, however, was only what every member of the little band was prepared for whenever he ventured from his home.

"There 's one thing I don't understand," said Hardin, when they had sat for some minutes on the fallen tree.

"What 's that?"

"We started on the southern route to Fort Stephenson, while Jim took the northern; either he or we have gotten off the track, for we ought to have been several miles apart, instead of coming together as we did."

"I don't believe it was Jim."

It was easy to settle the question, and they brought out their compasses. A surprise followed. Instead of pursuing an eastern course, as they had supposed, they were travelling due northeast, a direction which, if continued, would take them to the north of their destination.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Hardin, "how came we to do that?"

"How could we help it, when we have been travelling most of the night without anything to guide us?"

"We had our compasses."

"But, if you will think, we never looked at them since our meeting on the clearing, we must have gone astray shortly after that; we have travelled so far toward Lake Erie that instead of being to the south of Proctor's army, we are on the north of it."

"I don't see that it makes any difference, now that Perkins has fallen."

The expression on the face of George Hardin was grave, as he remarked in his guarded voice:

"We have crossed the route of Proctor, but was it to the east or west? If to the west, then he is between us and Fort Stephenson, and there is little use in our going farther, for he will arrive there ahead of us."

"I am sure we are still nearer than he; for we have been going all night while his soldiers have rested."

"But they started before us, and it 's mighty little travelling we did yesterday."

"We can go much faster than he; let 's be off."

Ben rose to his feet with an expression of impatience, for it seemed to him that everything had gone wrong. Obstacles of which neither had dreamed before starting had baffled them continually, and, worst of all, they had been obliged to

stand idle and witness the death of a friend before their very eyes. They had wandered from the course laid out for themselves, and could not be certain that they had not dropped behind the army of whose advance they had started to warn Major Croghan, the commandant at Fort Stephenson, still a long way off.

One important fact had made itself apparent: they were on the tramping grounds of the Shawanoe scouts, and now that the sun was shining, they needed all their woodcraft to elude them. The espionage would be intensified as they neared the Sandusky, and, though they were hungry, sleepy, and tired, it would not do to relax their vigilance for a minute.

They hurried as fast as they could from the scene of the sad incident they had witnessed on that early summer morning. After passing the small cultivated section, they struck another long stretch of woodland, into which they plunged apparently with as much ardor as during the first hour of their departure from Fort Meigs. To their surprise, they had not gone far when they again came upon a well-defined path, which they made certain, by consulting their compasses, led in the right direction.

"It looks as if we had struck a more thickly-settled country than it is farther west; this path has been used as much as the other," said Hardin.

"But I don't believe we shall find any of the people; there has been so much fighting that they have fled to the forts, leaving their property behind them."

"Where they are not likely to find it again; do you notice that the ground has been rising for some time—helloa! here 's a change!"

They were not disappointed when they emerged into a cultivated tract similar to that which they had left a short time before. There was the trampled corn and vegetation with the houses, every one of which was now a mass of smouldering ruins. It is well known that General Proctor devastated every portion of the country through which he marched with his soldiers and Indians. In the instance upon which our young friends had come there was not a building left standing; all had been destroyed by the ruthless invader.

But the young scouts were not to pass the spot without another interesting experience. While they kept within the shelter of the wood and peeped carefully out upon the broad open space they saw a single Indian, standing with his arms folded, and looking straight at the path over which they had reached the spot.

Once more the exceeding care of the youths seemed to have saved them. Since the Indian whom they descried was looking toward the point

where the path over which they advanced debouched into the opening, he must have seen them, but for their pause before they discovered all that was in front. By pushing a little farther forward, and screening their bodies, they escaped the detection that would have been certain but for this precaution.

"Ben," said Hardin, "that Indian is looking for some one to come over this path."

"He is n't looking for *us*."

"Of course not, but we must move to one side, where, whoever it is, we won't be seen; there may be twenty of them instead of one"

The shift of position was readily made. The two could keep watch of the trail without being observed, and, at the same time, the single Indian was in their field of vision, and his every movement was noted.

He was standing on the edge of a field, where the corn had been trampled prone with the earth. The path, which was evidently the avenue of communication between the widely-scattered neighbors, wound past the feet of the warrior, as if he had followed it from the opposite direction, and stopped to await the approach of some one or more from the west.

It was a notable fact that the Shawanoe carried no rifle, though the usual knife and tomahawk were at his girdle. His arms were folded across his mas-

sive chest, and his handsome face was without a touch of paint.

"By gracious!" suddenly exclaimed Ben Mayberry; "do you know who that is, George"

"No—yes, can it be?"

"It 's Tecumseh! He 's the last person I expected to see in this part of the world. Now I feel easier."

"Why?"

"If we fall into his hands, we shall be well treated."

"All the same, we don't intend to fall into his hands."

"He is surely waiting for some one to join him from over this trail."

The fact that Tecumseh was looking for the coming of some one was too manifest to be mistaken. He stood as motionless as a statue, with his eyes fixed on the edge of the wood. Once an uneasy feeling came over the young scouts who feared he had detected their approach, carefully as it was made, but reflection relieved their misgiving, since he would have given some outward sign of the fact, and they were sure they had not betrayed themselves.

The correctness of their surmise was shortly proven, when, without any preliminary announcement in the way of sound of footsteps, a tall figure

clad in the dress of one of General Harrison's scouts, appeared, making his way over the trail with long, noiseless strides. He carried his rifle in his left hand, and his head and shoulders were thrown slightly forward, as if he knew he was a little tardy in keeping his tryst, and was hurrying to make amends.

It was hard for Ben and George to restrain an exclamation of surprise when they recognized the man as Simon Kenton, the renowned pioneer and scout, and their devoted friend. Their impulse was to make themselves known to him, for his presence in that neighborhood and at that time would have been equal to a score of others of lesser note; but the youths were shrewd. Kenton was on his way to keep an appointment with Tecumseh, the great war chief of the Shawanoe, and it was not unlikely that the meeting was meant to be a secret one. Should he become aware that it had witnesses, he would be displeased, and perhaps compel them to withdraw, or remain where they were while he and the chieftain passed out of sight.

It need not be said that no matter how singular the conduct of Kenton, neither the young scouts nor any one who knew him could suspect him of double dealing. This remarkable man was as thorough a patriot and American as ever lived, and honest to the core. Brave, active, powerful, a con-

summate master of woodcraft, he had the simplicity of a child, and commanded the respect of his foes as well as the love and confidence of friends. General William Henry Harrison, who knew both him and Tecumseh intimately, looked upon Kenton as one of the noblest of men.

Tecumseh descried the familiar figure before it emerged from among the trees. The moment Kenton saw his old acquaintance, he flourished his right hand with a half-military salute, but the Shawanoe did not stir or show by any action that he observed the greeting, nor did he advance a step to meet him. Instead, he kept his place like a king awaiting the obeisance of a serving man. But when the great scout extended his hand, Tecumseh unfolded his arms and gave him his palm, while the dusky countenance lit up with unmistakable pleasure.

These two persons were enemies, but they were chivalrous ones. The blows they struck were honest, and either would have scorned to take an unfair advantage of the other. The coming together was like that of Saladin and King Richard. They had weighty matters to discuss, and, while doing so, no one could be more courteous. The interview ended, they would part with mutual expressions of esteem, and then straightway set to work to kill each other.

Ben Mayberry and George Hardin would not

have felt at ease in playing the eavesdropper, and yet they would have given much to overhear what passed between Kenton and Tecumseh. They saw them shake hands, stand a few minutes while talking, after which they withdrew a few paces to where a broad, flat stone extended along the side of the path. There they sat down, like brothers, and duly took up the discussion that had brought them together from points miles distant.

It so happened, that as they thus sat, their faces were turned toward the wood, so that the boys plainly saw their countenances. There was always a touch of waggishness in Kenton, which showed itself even in his old age, and when he had long been a devout Christian. His voice, as we have intimated, was unusually musical and the missionary, Rev. J. B. Finlay, tells how often it charmed the listeners at the early camp-meetings in the West.

It may be doubted whether a half dozen persons ever saw a smile on the face of Tecumseh. His race are noted for their gravity and melancholy disposition, and the famous leader of the Shawanoes seemed so impressed with his momentous mission that he was always profoundly in earnest. Daring indeed would have been that man who presumed to take any liberties with him.

But Simon Kenton did not hesitate to do so. The astounded youths who were watching the

couple saw him deliberately raise his hand and slap the shoulder of Tecumseh, breaking into laughter at the same moment, as if he had reached the climax of an amusing anecdote. The Indian did not even smile, and yet there was nothing in his manner like resentment over the odd proceeding. The young scouts observed Kenton throw back his head in silent laughter, and caught the gleam of his even, white teeth, which a young woman might have envied.

Tecumseh said something, and looked at him like a parent, grieved over the frivolity of a child. Kenton replied, and then both became serious, or rather the white man did, since the other had been in that mental state from the first. The scout laid his rifle on the ground on the farther side of himself, while his companion, it will be remembered, did not bring his most important weapon with him. When Kenton spoke, he turned toward his companion, so that his own profile was brought into view, but while listening, he looked in the direction of the wood, with his ear turned to the other. The chieftain rarely moved his head, though his bright eyes were continually flitting back and forth, and he often looked into the face of his friend. Sometimes the latter rested his hands on his knees, then he took off his coonskin cap, and ran his fingers through his hair, folded his arms for a minute, leaned back

with his hands clasped just below the uplifted knee of one leg which served as a poise for his body, and then, as the conversation became more earnest, his restlessness departed, and he sat as motionless as the Shawanoe had been from the first.

It was a striking scene upon which Ben and George looked. Several times they caught the sound of Kenton's voice, but were unable to distinguish the words, and not once could they hear the low, resonant tones of Tecumseh, who seemed determined that if there were eavesdroppers near they should gain no advantage.

Had a person attempted to interpret the character of the conversation without knowing any of the words uttered, he would have said that the first part was introductory and marked by some facetiousness on the part of Kenton, who indulged in the restless manifestations that have been noted. Tecumseh said little, but before long the real theme that had brought them together came under discussion. The Shawanoe did most of the talking at that time, while Kenton gave respectful attention. When the chieftain had made his views clear, the white man spoke with an earnestness that increased as he progressed. He was seen to shake his head, and, leaning forward, used his long forefinger to tap the palm of his other hand and give emphasis to his utterances. Tecumseh had folded his arms again, and his face

was turned toward the wood, but he looked steadily sideways at his companion and did not allow a syllable to escape him.

Once Kenton raised his voice in his excitement to a pitch that enabled the youths to catch a sentence—"*You 'll make a great mistake*"—and then, as if sensible of his imprudence, it dropped to the previous level of unintelligibility.

Suddenly both rose to their feet, the action being so abrupt that for an instant the spectators thought they were about to engage in mortal conflict, but, instead of that, they clasped hands, said something evidently of a pleasant nature, and then Kenton picked up his gun from the ground, and, waving a salute to Tecumseh, who had again folded his arms and assumed his statuesque posture, he strode in the direction of the trail by which he had reached the rendezvous. He walked rapidly, as if in haste to fulfill some other engagement, and a few minutes after his disappearance, Tecumseh turned the other way and passed from sight.

Then it was that George Hardin and Ben Mayberry ventured to resume their seemingly endless journey toward Fort Stephenson. There were many perils yet to be passed, but let it suffice to say that they went safely through them all, and at the time fixed upon for their arrival at Fort Stephenson, they reached that endangered post.

CHAPTER XVII.

BRILLIANT WORK.

THE young scouts received a royal welcome to the rough frontier post named Fort Stephenson on the Lower Sandusky. The brilliant Major Croghan learning that they were from General Smith at Fort Meigs, and quick to observe their fatigue, insisted that they should partake of food and rest themselves before making known the message they had brought to him. Nothing could have been more acceptable to the youths, who were struck by the fact that the young commandant did not seem to be impressed by the importance of the communication they had carried at the cost of so much danger and privation.

The huge log structure had been hastily erected, and was provided with but a single cannon, the garrison numbering one hundred and sixty men—a force so insignificant as well to excite the scorn of General Proctor, who announced his intention of wiping it out of existence by way of pastime.

"Well," said Major Croghan, when their meal was finished and he had lit his pipe, "inasmuch as

General Smith sent you off in such a hurry that he had no time to put his message in writing, I shall be glad to hear what you have to tell me."

George Hardin took upon himself to reply.

"You know, sir, that General Proctor and Tecumseh have made two attempts to capture Fort Meigs?"

"I have heard something of the kind," replied the young officer, who seemed to be in unusually good spirits for one who was in such imminent peril himself.

"And he failed; General Harrison has gone to Kentucky for reinforcements and supplies."

"Something of that has reached my ears," observed Major Croghan, who still displayed a strange indifference to his own situation.

"Well, General Proctor has taken half his force, numbering about three thousand men——"

"I beg pardon, he has not withdrawn more than two thousand; go on."

The youths were amazed. It began to look as if the commandant knew as much, if not more about this business than they.

"We did n't count them," said young Hardin, his face slightly flushing; "but that 's the estimate General Smith made."

"The General is a most excellent officer, but somewhat nervous; well?"

"Proctor is on his way to attack you with his large force, and General Smith sent us to warn you to be ready for the most desperate fight of your life."

Major Croghan was sitting on a rough camp-stool of home manufacture, his visitors being seated on similar supports directly in front of him. The handsome soldier had crossed his legs and loosely held his clay pipe in his mouth, while he slowly puffed the smoke from between his lips. He looked fixedly into the face of George Hardin, and then as a half-smile lit up his countenance, he removed the stem of his pipe.

"Do you young men know what I am thinking about?"

As he asked the question, he turned his eyes upon Ben Mayberry, who, deeming it his duty to make a suitable reply, promptly did so.

"I am sure we have n't the first idea."

"If General Smith were a younger officer, or our stations were the same in the service, I should demand satisfaction for his insult."

"Why—how is that?" asked the young Kentuckian, in some embarrassment.

"His action, stripped of all ornament, is, in effect, 'Major Croghan, convinced that you don't understand your business, I send a couple of boys to teach you.' It amounts to that and nothing less."

The smile had faded, and the officer was unmistakably angry.

"I hope," said Hardin, feeling uncomfortable, "you don't blame *us*."

"On the contrary, I shall compliment you in my report to General Harrison for the manner in which you performed the wholly unnecessary duty entrusted to you. I have heard Simon Kenton speak in high terms of you, and I am sure his good opinion is warranted. But don't you see that the only reason General Smith could have for sending you on a tramp of forty miles through a most dangerous country is that I am unaware of my peril, and have made no preparations to meet it?"

This view of the business had not seriously occurred to the youths, but they saw its force. It was not their province, however, to mingle in any such dispute, so they held their peace.

"Did he send any one beside you two young gentlemen?"

"Yes," replied Ben; "one of his scouts, Jim Perkins, started ahead of us."

"I have seen nothing of him; why is n't he here?"

"Because he is dead."

"Are you sure of that?"

"We saw him shot by the Indians, and we had a close call ourselves."

Major Croghan smoked vigorously for several minutes. His reflections were of a displeasing character, as his words proved.

"That poor fellow's life was thrown away; had General Harrison been at home, it would not have occurred. Has General Smith forgotten that I have as skilful scouts in my employ as he—always excepting Simon Kenton and yourselves," added the officer, unbending for the moment; "that I know all the particulars of the sieges of Fort Meigs; that I am aware both failed, as a matter of course, for there would have been no excuse if they had *not* failed; and that Proctor has left half his force under Tecumseh to continue the siege or make an attack if he sees a chance, while he is marching with the other half to attack me?"

It was on the tongue of Ben Mayberry to say that they had seen Tecumseh that day much nearer to Fort Stephenson than to Fort Meigs, but loyalty to Kenton kept his lips closed. It could not be that Tecumseh was in the neighborhood for the purpose of joining in the attack on Fort Stephenson, else Major Croghan would have known it.

"Well, it follows that since I am kept almost hourly informed of how things are going within a reasonable distance, I am not in need of any advice from General Smith, and I don't thank him for it. However," quickly added the young officer, feeling

that he had gone too far; "I beg your pardon for speaking so plainly; General Smith is my superior officer, and I am ready to obey any directions from him in the absence of General Harrison. When you return to General Smith, tell him you delivered his message, and give him my compliments and thanks, with my assurance that all the news he sent, and considerable in addition, was old when it reached me. Enough on that score; I shall be very glad to have you remain with us, but perhaps since the attack by Proctor is imminent, it will be more prudent for you to depart after you have fully rested."

"That 's the reason why we want to stay," said the young Kentuckian, with a flash of his eyes, while Hardin nodded his head in approval.

"It does me good to hear such words; you are hardly man-grown, but are more skilled in woodcraft and knowledge of Indian warfare, Kenton has told me, than most men, and there are not many better rifle shots than you. My garrison is small, numbering only one hundred and sixty, and you will be more than welcome."

"That suits us exactly," said Hardin; "when do you think the attack will be made?"

"Why, that is what *you* came to tell *me*," replied the Major, with a smile.

"I know we did, but we don't know half as much about the business as you."

"Proctor is drawing near as rapidly as he can, consistent with his own safety."

"Why, what danger can *he* be in?" asked Ben; "General Smith dares n't march out to attack him with his small force, and I 'm sure *you* don't intend to."

"Hardly, but Proctor has a wholesome fear of General Harrison; he knows he left some time ago for reinforcements, and there 's no telling when he will be back; it is possible that the General will meet the soldiers on the way, and Proctor would prefer to be elsewhere when he arrives."

"We passed pretty close to Proctor, but did not see anything of his army, though we met plenty of his scouts."

"I think we shall have a visit from him in the course of a day or two, though I shall not know with certainty until I receive the reports of my scouts this evening."

"You have n't any fear, Major," said Hardin, with some hesitation, "about how it will end if he attacks you?"

"He has a dozen men to our one, but we are behind breastworks and shall make the best fight we know how. Since we are to have *your* help, I may reply that I am very hopeful of beating off the enemy."

It was on August 2, 1813, that the British Gen-

eral, Proctor, appeared with his large force in front of Fort Stephenson, the enemy, as already stated, outnumbering the small garrison by more than ten to one. As the soldiers, in their brilliant uniforms, came into view like an ocean of wild flowers fringing the woods and overflowing into the broad clearing in front of the fort, they formed an impressive sight, and more than one of the Americans, who looked upon the masses of men gathering for battle, turned pale and wondered whether by any miracle they could escape falling into the power of the ruthless officer who paid a price for every scalp wrenched from the crowns of the struggling patriots.

Hundreds of Indian warriors were there, moving among the trees, but taking care to show themselves to the observant garrison, as if to remind them what their fate would be if they dared to brave their fury. Tecumseh was not present, he being with the main body in front of Fort Meigs, but enough of the savages were there to carry out any barbarous scheme that the British leader might conceive.

When General Proctor had sufficiently impressed the little band of defenders, he sent forward a messenger under a flag of truce to Major Croghan. The bearer was received, and the American officer read the written message, which was a summons to surrender, accompanied by the usual statement that in

case of refusal, General Proctor would be unable to restrain his Indian allies from massacring every one of the prisoners. It was a similar message, conveyed unofficially to Gen William Hull, the year before at Detroit, which terrified that timid commander into surrendering his entire force to General Brock.

But a different man from General Hull commanded at Fort Stephenson. Ten minutes after the reception of the summons and threat, the messenger placed in the hands of General Proctor the reply, which stated that not only did Major Croghan refuse to surrender, but the contingency named by Proctor was impossible, since, if the fort fell into the possession of Proctor, he would find not a single prisoner left for his Indians to massacre. In other words, Major Croghan declined to obey the summons.

It has been stated that this gallant young officer had but a single cannon in his fort, but he made it do the duty of a dozen. It was first loaded with ball and then crammed to the muzzle with slugs and bits of iron, the charge of powder being doubled. This formidable weapon was aimed to rake the ditch which would soon be swarming with assailants, and carefully masked, so that the enemy suspected nothing of what awaited them.

Major Croghan was as cool as a veteran of three

times his years. He moved among his men, inspiring confidence by his calmness, and assuring all that if they did their duty there was no doubt of the repulse of the enemy, who had already been given more than one taste of their mettle. Every soldier was placed at the best advantage, so that from behind the defences he could fire at the foe, while he was almost perfectly protected from the return fire.

"Aim low," said the Major; "don't throw away a shot, and, when the fighting begins, don't stop until not a Redcoat or Indian is visible."

General Proctor must have expected a refusal from the American, for scarcely was it received, when his men advanced to the assault. The defenders held their fire until the ditch was crowded with their enemies, and then the overloaded cannon was fired.

The discharge was made at the right second, and did terrific execution. The tempest of iron scattered death and destruction on every hand, and the assailants broke in a panic and skurried across the clearing, as the first advance fled before the fierce storm at Bunker Hill.

But, as in the former case, the enemy was only repulsed, and Major Croghan knew they would try the assault again. While the smoke was still issuing from the muzzle of the cannon, it was swung round and another charge rammed home. On the top of

that was jammed the bullets and iron scraps, until the brazen throat could hold no more. Not a second was lost, for there was none to throw away.

Meanwhile, the soldiers were firing their muskets with all possible rapidity, and many a Redcoat and redskin went down never to rise again. The men did not forget the instructions of Major Croghan, and aimed and fired as fast as they could reload. The enemy was equally active, and their bullets rattled like hail against the logs and intrenchments, while the sullen boom of the artillery and the crashing of the solid shot showed that a more serious danger threatened the fort.

General Proctor was angered by the repulse of the first column, and, taking care to keep himself beyond reach of the hurtling shots, gave orders for a second column to make the assault and capture the fort. They were to press on, no matter how murderous a reception they received.

All this compelled some delay, which was sufficient for Major Croghan to reload the piece that had done them excellent service.

Once more the soldiers crowded forward, shouting and eager, as if determined to override all obstacles, and, dashing over the intrenchments, bayonet the valiant defenders. Major Croghan himself directed the fire of the cannon, which again inflicted more fearful destruction than in the first instance. It was

more than the bravest men could stand. Many of their officers had fallen, and those that were left were unable to hold the survivors to their work. They fled across the plain, with their officers at their heels, waving their swords and vainly commanding them to return; and as they fled the men continued to drop on every hand, for within the intrenchments the Americans were picking them off as fast as they could, so long as they remained in sight. Not until no human target presented itself was there a lull in the firing.

For the third time the cannon was loaded to the muzzle, and Major Croghan grimly awaited another assault from the enemy, but he waited in vain. Two such repulses were sufficient for them.

There was one spectre which continually haunted the British general: that was the stern personality of Gen. William Henry Harrison. As we have stated, he had left Fort Meigs some time before for Kentucky to secure reinforcements to drive out the invaders upon American soil. He had already proven himself to be a skilful as well as a brave general, capable of striking effective blows, and quick to seize every opportunity presented to him in the complicated game of war.

Tecumseh, whose ability caused his appointment as brigadier-general in the British army, was much the superior of Proctor, and, though a savage him-

self, showed greater chivalry and regard for the humane features of the bitter contest than did the officer from whom more ought to have been expected. Shortly after the repulse from Fort Stephenson, rumors reached Proctor that Harrison was hurrying northward at the head of a large force. Frightened by the news, the invader withdrew from before the post that had been so bravely defended, and joined his Indian allies under the Shawanoe leader.

Tecumseh made no attempt to conceal his disgust.

"You come in this country to defeat the Americans," he said to Proctor; "and you expect to do it by retreating; why did you ever come here at all?"

"But, Tecumseh," replied the commander, anxious to retain the good-will or his valuable ally; "we cannot have victories all the time."

"You will have none at all!" was the impetuous response; "we conquered the Americans at the River Raisin, but we have lost more men than they, and now you have been defeated again. My warriors will not remain with me; many have already left, for they see no hope."

"Surely so eloquent an orator as Tecumseh can keep them with him and bring more to his help."

The chieftain impatiently shook his head.

"Why should I ask them to fight, when you run

away? You are afraid to expose yourself to the bullets of the Americans; when your men and my warriors fall, you are safe beyond harm; you promise me to fight, and then when all is ready you run away."

These were daring words to say to the leader of the British army, but Tecumseh always said what he believed to whomsoever was before him. It was true, as he declared, that several hundred of his warriors had withdrawn from the British army and gone to their homes, disgusted with the manner in which the campaign was conducted. Many more would have departed but for Tecumseh's pleadings. He assured them that he would not permit Proctor to continue his dilatory tactics; he would compel him to fight, and, if he refused to do so, he himself would withdraw with them. He was thus enabled to keep a formidable body under his command, and since events elsewhere had mostly gone in favor of the British, the chieftain was persuaded partially to believe that the triumphs would be shared by the army under the command of Proctor to which his warriors were attached.

No repulse could have been more disastrous than that received by General Proctor in his attack upon Fort Stephenson. He lost one hundred and twenty men in killed and wounded, and, alarmed by the reports of an advance of General Harrison, abandoned

the siege as already stated. The truth was Harrison was not in the neighborhood, and had the enemy displayed half the skill they showed elsewhere, the post must have fallen. Of the garrison, one man was killed and three wounded, none seriously.

It has been said that there were few land campaigns during the War of 1812 which we can recall with pride. The remembrance of more than one must bring the tinge of shame to our cheeks, though Generals Scott, Brown, Ripley, and others proved themselves heroic leaders, and did their part in repelling the invaders. But among all the achievements there was no exploit more brilliant than the defence of Fort Stephenson, in early August, 1813. For his heroism, Major Croghan was presented with a handsome sword by the ladies of Chillicothe, Ohio, and Congress voted him the thanks of the nation. Some years later, he was presented with the gold medal that he had so gallantly won.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STINGING REBUKE.

BEN MAYBERRY and George Hardin were in Fort Stephenson all through the desperate fight with Proctor, and they acquitted themselves like men. A bullet nipped off one of Hardin's curls at the temple, and the coat of Ben was pierced by a bullet which grazed the skin. The two remained at the post as long as there seemed a probability of the attack being renewed, and, when all danger of that had passed, they left for Fort Meigs, to which General Harrison soon returned. As before, the young scouts were ready for any duty that might be required of them.

Important movements impended on both sides. As the war progressed and the enemy grew more determined, our Government saw the need of vigor and skill in defence. The process of weeding out the incompetent officers, which is always necessary after the beginning of hostilities, was pushed, and, though more disasters followed, a greater semblance to scientific warfare was secured.

One truth had become apparent to Proctor and

his officers; it was impossible to capture the Western posts until the mastery of Lake Erie was secured. The enemy had a strong squadron on the lake, but the Americans disputed their supremacy, and the decisive battle remained to be fought.

There was abundant work for General Harrison's scouts. Simon Kenton was continually on duty. He penetrated the hostile lines and brought back information of the greatest importance. Once he was captured by a band of Wyandots, but when all hope seemed gone, he effected his escape and rejoined his friends without a scratch. In what manner this remarkable feat was accomplished, the scout never explained. His truthfulness would not permit him to fabricate a story, and for some reason known only to himself, he never would make known the particulars.

"I got into trouble, as I told you," he said, with a grin; "but I got out agin, and am here ready for bus'ness—ain't that enough?"

"I think I understand it," remarked George Hardin, as he and Ben Mayberry were scouting through the woods in the rear of Proctor's army.

"Well, how do you understand it?"

"He got away through the help of Tecumseh."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because I can't see why, if it was done in some other way, Kenton would have any reason for not

telling; he is generally ready to answer all questions."

"If it was through the help of Tecumseh, why should n't he say so?"

"Don't you see what harm it would do Tecumseh? If Kenton made it known that the chief saved him, when he could n't help himself, the fact would get to Tecumseh's Indians in some way. If we have spies in Proctor's camp, he has spies in ours, and the news would travel fast. All the Indians know Kenton, and if they should learn that the most dangerous man in our whole army had been set free by one of the brigadier-generals of their own race, it would weaken the power of Tecumseh."

"I always fancied that he was not afraid to do anything he chose with his people and no one dared to question him."

"I suppose that is so, but Kenton says the Indians are dissatisfied with the way things are going; many of them have left, and still more would go if they had the pretext which this act of friendship would give them."

"Would n't that be a great advantage to us?"

"Yes; but dishonorable toward Tecumseh, and Simon Kenton would die before doing a mean thing or betraying a friend."

"And so would Tecumseh, but it is n't safe for the rest of us to count on his friendship; he 's fight-

ing like a demon now, and eager to kill as many Americans as he can."

The youths had halted beside a small stream of clear water, from which they drank, while they ate their modest lunch. They had seen no signs of Indians since leaving camp early that morning, and believed themselves so far to the rear of the British army that there was little or no danger; but it need not be said that when without the lines of their friends they conducted themselves much the same as if within those of their enemies. They had carefully reconnoitred their surroundings before sitting down for the brief rest. Their tones were as low as if they knew a band of Indians were encamped within a hundred feet of them, and both were continually glancing to the right and left, and at every point of the compass. It was because of this vigilance that they detected the approach of a young man in the uniform of a British officer before he observed them, though that followed within the same minute.

He was a handsome youth, not much older than themselves, with a pleasing face and attractive personality. His hand rested on the hilt of his sword at his side, and it was evident from his looks and manner that he was tired, warm, and thirsty, for the day was unusually sultry, and he had walked a long way. He was looking for water, and when he

caught the gleam of the sparkling stream, his eyes brightened and his footsteps quickened.

But fate so willed it that as he came along the trail, he walked directly toward the two youths, one of whom came like a flash to his feet with his rifle levelled.

"Surrender!" commanded the young Kentuckian, who had assumed this threatening pose.

The officer stopped, glanced keenly at them, and whipped out his sword.

"None of that!" warned Hardin, who now came to his feet with gun pointed; "you are our prisoner, and can't help yourself."

The officer smiled and made a military salute with his weapon.

"All right," he said; "it looks as if you had me, but I am frightfully thirsty, and I trust you will allow me to drink from the little stream at your feet; I have been looking for something of the kind for the last two hours."

The young scouts had expected nothing like this. The officer showed no sign of fear after the first moment of discovery, and, as if there could be no refusal of the permission he asked, he walked forward, still smiling and courteous.

The youths were suspicious, fearing that his approach was meant to veil a sudden attack upon them. The officer seemed to have no firearms, his

only weapon being his sword, which he still held in his hand. Ben was on the point of ordering him to return it to its sheath, when he deftly did so, thus virtually disarming himself for the moment, though he still possessed the weapon.

"Do you surrender?" demanded the young Kentuckian, stepping across the brook and barring the way of the officer; "you must do that before we allow you to drink."

"Well, there does n't seem to be any help for it."

"You have n't answered my question."

"Yes, I surrender; do you demand my sword?"

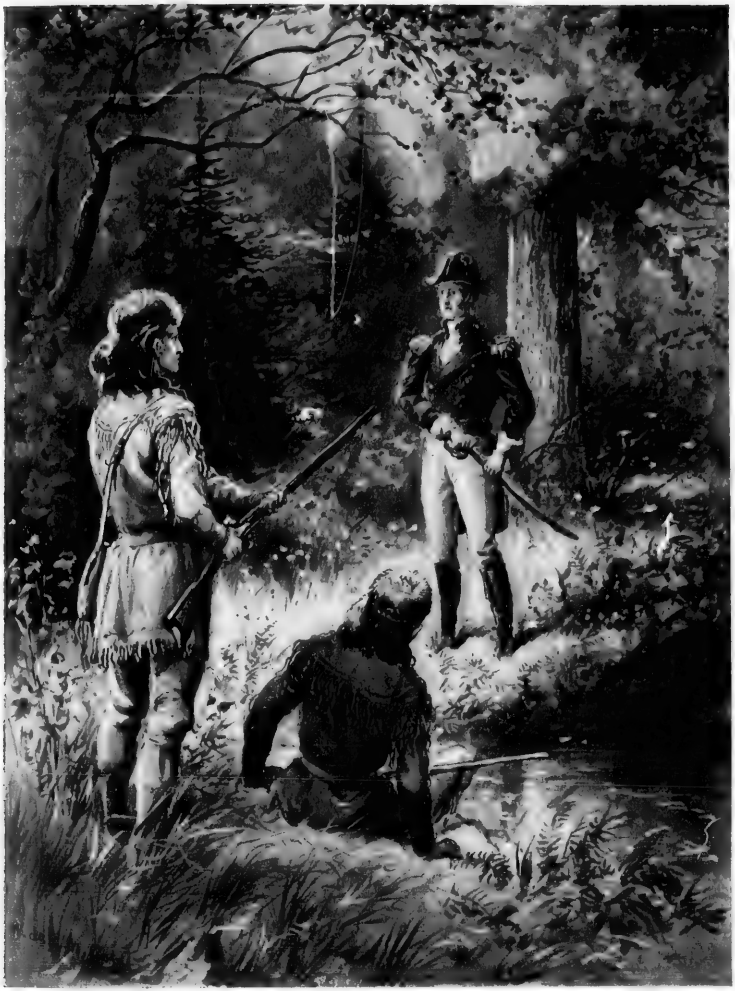
"No," replied Ben, seeing a certain humor in the situation; "your surrender is accepted with the honors of war; you may keep your sword."

"Many thanks for the kindness; I shall remember the favor when our situations are reversed, and you become my prisoners."

"We don't intend to become your prisoners."

"Of course not; I did not intend to become yours, but there 's no telling what a day may bring forth; nothing is lost by observing these little amenities; and now, if you will allow me to drink dry that small river behind you, my bliss will be complete."

Ben stepped aside, and, advancing with a bow, the officer removed his hat, knelt down and drank a refreshing draught of the sparkling water. He



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sighed with enjoyment as he drew a spotless white handkerchief and wiped his mouth. Then sitting down on the declivity near them, he said with the utmost coolness:

"My name is Lieutenant Gerald Brown of His Majesty's Seventy-Fourth; I assume from your dress and the fact that you seem to be alone, that you are scouts in the employ of General Harrison?"

"You are correct," replied Hardin.

"Is it not dangerous for you to venture so far from your lines without any friends within call?"

"It is not the first time we have done so."

The instant George Hardin uttered these words, he saw the grave mistake he had committed. His reply was an admission to Lieutenant Brown that they were beyond the immediate reach of any of their friends, and it was probable that it was the very information the officer sought when he asked the apparently innocent question.

It occurred to Ben Mayberry at the same moment that it was rather curious that this officer should also be alone upon what at least was debatable ground. Could it be that some of his friends were near? If so, the situation of the scouts might prove anything but pleasant.

"How far off are your friends?" asked Hardin, who, like his comrade, had seated himself within a few feet of the prisoner. The latter seemed wholly

at home. He was lolling on the ground, his body supported on one elbow, while, after drawing his handkerchief across his moist forehead, he flung it into his hat which he laid on the bank. Then with a genial smile he looked up at his questioner.

"Now, you would n't compel a fellow in my position to give valuable information to the enemy, would you?"

"We could n't compel you to do anything," answered Hardin, with a blush; "but having admitted that we may have entered into an unsafe position, I see no reason why you should refuse to be equally frank."

"Very well, I will do so; my danger is not one tenth as great as yours."

"How do you figure that out?" asked Ben, with vague uneasiness.

"Well, you are a long way from your friends; I am very close to mine."

"How close?"

"So close that if I raised my voice they would hear me; all I should have to say would be '*here!*' in just such a tone as that to bring them to my help."

Was there ever such a clever piece of impudence? While answering the question of his captors, he called to his friends to come to his help!

And it was no idle boast on the part of Lieuten-

ant Brown, for the words were yet on his tongue when eight soldiers and the Wyandot half-breed, Wallah, came into sight at the very spot where the young officer had presented himself, and drew near.

"Now, gentlemen," observed Lieutenant Brown, leaping to his feet and bowing first to the right and then to the left; "may I have the liberty of asking you to be good enough to acknowledge yourselves prisoners of mine? Sorry to trouble you, but really there seems no help for it, and such, you know, are the fortunes of war."

Ben and George bit their lips with chagrin, for, as their captor said, there was no help for it. The tables had been turned with a vengeance. Having learned that no friends of the young men were within call, Lieutenant Brown summoned his own, and made prisoners of the young scouts while they stood at his side, and within a few minutes after he had surrendered to them. Ben Mayberry could not resist a bitter exclamation, and he gnashed his teeth in helpless anger.

"I beg you not to allow yourself to get excited," remarked Lieutenant Brown, suavely; "such, I repeat, are the fortunes of war, and I shall reciprocate the courtesy you showed me by allowing you to keep your rifles, of which you are undoubtedly quite fond. Do I understand you to surrender?"

"How can we help it?" growled Hardin.

"I beg your pardon, but you have not answered my question."

Fate seemed to have ordered that the whole thing should be repeated, and George contributed his part by answering:

"Yes, we surrender."

He would have offered to give up their weapons had not their captor informed them they might be retained.

Meanwhile, the eight soldiers and Wallah came forward, all of them easily reading the situation of matters.

"Halt!" ordered the lieutenant, raising his hand. The soldiers who were straggling forward without regard to step, instantly paused, but the half-breed, laying one hand on his knife at his girdle, continued to advance.

"*Halt!*" repeated the officer, addressing him directly. There was an ominous gleam in his eyes as he too laid his hand on the hilt of his weapon. The miscreant was cowed, and fell sullenly back among the soldiers.

"Keep your guns," repeated the officer in a lower tone to the youths, "and if that devil interferes with you, kill him!"

"Why not let us do so now?" asked Ben, who knew the treacherous nature of the half-breed. But the lieutenant shook his head.

"It won't do; I 'll keep an eye on him."

It had been the hope of the young scouts that Wallah had fallen in the attack on Fort Stephenson, but he seemed to possess the faculty like Proctor of keeping out of harm's way. In some manner he learned or suspected that his true character had been discovered, and took care to keep beyond reach of the Americans, who would have made short work with him had the chance been theirs.

It was a bitter experience, for our young friends, who had but the single consolation of knowing they had been taken prisoner by an honorable foe, who would protect them from injustice, so long as the power was his.

It was a revelation to the youths when they had not marched more than an eighth of a mile that they were ushered into the camp of General Proctor, who they supposed was a number of miles distant. His army had encamped in a large open space, near a broad stream of water, and pickets were placed to guard against surprise. Since his junction with his Indian allies, the British leader probably had about four thousand under his command, despite the withdrawals of the dissatisfied ones.

Upon the arrival of Lieutenant Brown with his two prisoners, he turned them over to another officer, who conducted the lads to a space near the

middle of the large encampment, where they found about twenty partners in captivity. These consisted of regular soldiers who had been captured during the fighting. They were not bound, since their location with a couple of guards on duty prevented any attempt to escape. The prisoners were lolling on the ground, some smoking their pipes, others talking, while two were playing some sort of game, by flinging their partly-closed jack-knives into the air and watching them as they struck the ground. Two others were stretched on their backs, with their hats over their faces, sound asleep. All were of that rollicking, careless nature which seems as contented in misfortune as in prosperity. They took scarcely any notice of Ben and George, who, in obedience to the command of their new officer, walked into the circle, as it may be called, and sat down somewhat to one side and near each other, too much depressed to utter a word.

But they were not left long to themselves. Suddenly Ben Mayberry, who was watching the two soldiers playing with their jack-knives, received a cracking blow on his crown which made him see stars.

"Who the mischief did that?" he demanded, drawing his knife and wheeling around, for after their arrival in camp the rifles of the boys had been taken from them.

A dozen Shawanoes, Wyandots, and Pottawatomies had gathered near the group of prisoners, with the manifest purpose of having some entertainment at their expense. They were grinning and talking among themselves, while each one was provided with a long, heavy stick or club. Not only they but other Indians were converging from different points, all bent on the same purpose.

Both of the guards saw the blow struck the young Kentuckian, but instead of interposing, they laughed as if it was all a pleasant joke. Clearly, no protection was to be expected from them.

"D n't do anything," admonished Hardin; "we can't help ourselves."

"I believe it was that Wallah who hit me; I would like to have one chance at him."

"It would delight them to have us resist, and only make it worse for us."

Five minutes later the Indians had increased to fifty, with others still coming. They were in high spirits and having capital fun with the prisoners. The two soldiers who had been playing with their jack-knives abruptly stopped the game and were kept dodging back and forth to escape the blows that were struck from every direction. The sleepers were aroused by whacks which almost fractured their skulls, while not a single prisoner was allowed to rest for a moment. When one leaped away from

his prosecutor on one side of the space, it was to meet others who rained their blows upon him until the bewildered fellow had no way to turn. Bruised, bleeding, and defenceless, the victim sank to the ground, while the brutal tormentors kept their clubs continually swinging.

The activity of the young scouts enabled them for a time to escape many of the blows. More than once the club aimed at them descended upon others, but the Indians crowded around so thickly that it was impossible to elude all of them. Shoulders, legs, heads, and arms were racked with pain, while the excitement of the Indians increased with the growing anguish of the prisoners. It would not take long to work themselves up to a pitch that they would draw their knives and massacre every one of the Americans.

The guards had stepped out of the way so as to give the Indians free room. But the strangest feature of this painful business was that among the spectators watching the shameful scene was General Proctor himself. He stood with arms folded, an amused smile on his face, while occasionally he threw back his head with uproarious laughter when some miserable victim, blinded with pain, and with the blood streaming over his face, made a grotesque attempt to escape those that were torturing him.

The scene became more distressing every minute.

The crisis was at hand, when the Indians would throw aside their clubs and draw their knives. Then heaven help the poor prisoners!

Suddenly the sound of a horse's hoofs were heard amid the din. The animal was coming on a full run, and the next instant dashed up to the throng, and as he was thrown on his haunches, Tecumseh, his face ablaze with fury, leaped to the ground. With one sweep of his mighty arm, he smote Wallah, the half-breed full in the face, and stretched him senseless on his back; then with lightning-like quickness, he almost broke the skull of another of the tormentors, and, whipping out his knife, thundered:

"I will kill the first one who lays hands on the prisoners!"

Wheeling about so as to face General Proctor, he demanded, with flashing eyes:

"What do you mean by permitting this?"

"Sir," replied the embarrassed officer, "your warriors cannot be restrained."

The lip of the great Shawanoe curled with scorn, and, pointing his finger at him, he said with blistering sarcasm:

"You are not fit to command! Go home, and put on petticoats!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE.

NO man who had seen Tecumseh when roused to wrath ever willingly provoked him. He overawed the savage tormentors gathered round the prisoners, and they slunk away, like so many school-children under the lash of their teacher. General Proctor was about to add some words of explanation to what he had said, when the chieftain, with one contemptuous glance at him, turned his back and left him alone.

Three days later an unexpected piece of good fortune came to Ben Mayberry, George Hardin, and the remaining prisoners. They were exchanged and sent back to the army under General Harrison. It may be believed that Proctor was relieved to be rid of what could not fail to be a disturbing element in his army.

It has been shown that the enemy saw the impossibility of capturing the Western posts until they first secured the mastery of Lake Erie. The Americans on their part decided to fit out a squadron on Lake Ontario, not only to resist the British vessels,

but to carry troops to such points as needed them. The chief American port on the lakes was Sackett's Harbor. It was made a naval depot, and Commodore Chauncey spent the closing months of 1812 and the opening ones of the following year in constructing and launching a squadron to operate on Lake Ontario.

In April, York, now Toronto, was captured, the British troops fleeing so rapidly that they left their baggage behind. Sackett's Harbor being left uncovered, it was attacked by a strong force of the enemy, who received a decisive repulse at the hands of General Brown, but a number of conflicts which followed were unfavorable to the Americans.

At the time of these events, Oliver Hazard Perry was vigorously engaged in building a squadron to operate on Lake Erie. He had entered the navy in 1799, when fourteen years old, being the son of a naval officer, and he was only twenty-eight years of age when he made ready to try conclusions with the fleet of Commodore Barclay.

It chafed Perry to see the British fleet sailing complacently around the lake, and, although he had never taken part in a naval battle, he was impatient to fight the insolent invaders. By extraordinary exertions he completed his fleet of nine vessels, of which the *Lawrence* was the flagship. Eager as he was to attack the enemy, he was too wise to neglect

any necessary preparation. He drilled his men to a high state of efficiency, and was in command of a formidable force when he sailed out of Put-in Bay, early in September, 1813, about a month after the gallant defence of Fort Stephenson. He carried fifty-five guns, while the six vessels of Commodore Barclay had sixty-three, the number of men being nearly equal.

The two fleets met on the 10th of September at the western end of Lake Erie. When forming his line of battle, Perry ran up a flag displaying the last words of the immortal Lawrence, killed in his fight with the *Shannon* three months before—"*Don't give up the ship!*"

From the moment of opening the battle, the enemy concentrated a tremendous fire on the *Lawrence*, as if determined to sink it and its commander. The crashing shot wrought such havoc that at the end of two hours the flagship was sinking. The *Niagara* showed scarcely any effects of the battle, and, springing into an open boat, Perry ordered the sailors to row him to that vessel. They dipped their oars and rowed with might and main, with the shot flying all around them.

Perry was so aglow with the inspiration of battle that, instead of sitting down, as he ought to have done, he stood erect at the stern in full uniform, as he passed within pistol shot of the enemy. He was

recognized by them, and a fire was converged upon him so hot and continuous, that the wonder is he was not quickly killed. Not a hair of his head, however, was harmed.

All at once in the crisis of this strange scene the sailors stopped.

"What is the meaning of that?" asked the wondering Perry, looking down into the bronzed faces.

"Not another stroke will we row," replied a burly seaman, "until you sit down!"

If the sailors showed a lack of discipline, it certainly was not a lack of wisdom, for the action of their commander was inexcusably reckless. He realized it, and sat down. Instantly the paddles were dipped again, and the lusty arms quickly placed the smaller boat alongside the *Niagara*, upon which the commodore's flag was immediately hoisted.

The fight was now renewed with the utmost fierceness. While the advantage was with the Americans, owing to their superior markmanship, it was not decisive. It became necessary for Commodore Barclay to arrange a new line of battle, and he was engaged at the difficult work when Perry, seizing the critical opportunity, sent the *Niagara* directly among the enemy's vessels, delivering broadsides right and left. The other ships hurried to his aid, and the united fire became so destructive

that at the end of fifteen minutes, Commodore Barclay surrendered, that being the first time in the history of England that she had ever surrendered an entire squadron.

When the question is asked why England, the greatest naval power in the world, was so uniformly unsuccessful on the ocean against us, the answer is found in the wonderful accuracy of our firing. This was repeatedly proven in the remarkable victories on the ocean, and was strikingly shown in the decisive victory on Lake Erie. The British loss was two hundred killed and wounded; that of the Americans, twenty-seven killed and ninety-six wounded. Commodore Barclay went into the battle with one arm, and when he came out the other was gone, while six hundred of his men were made prisoners. It is easy to sympathize with the exultant note of Commodore Perry, hurriedly written and despatched to General Harrison: "We have met the enemy and they are ours. Two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop."

This extraordinary victory was of the highest importance, and marked the turning of the tide. Vastly more depended on it than a superficial glance would show, and Proctor was as anxious to hear the news as Harrison. Had Perry been defeated, Proctor intended to invade Ohio, and, in the confident expectation that he would fail, the

British commander had made preparations to cross the lake. On the other hand, if Perry won, Harrison meant to march into Canada, and with equal faith in the skill and bravery of his fellow-patriots he was ready to march as soon as he received the momentous tidings. Before the close of the month, he embarked with his army at Sandusky Bay, and landed near Malden on the Canada side.

The scouts of Proctor gave him due notice of the approach of his enemy. Expecting his appearance, Proctor called a council of war, at which Tecumseh was present. The chief was taciturn and angry, for, despite his protests, the British leader had steadily fallen back before the advance of the American, and he was prepared to hear another retreat decided upon.

The map which Proctor often consulted, and which was passed around among his officers, was one of the most curious that has ever served a military commander. A large piece of birch bark had been stripped from the tree, and upon the white inner surface all the hills, depressions, rivers, streams, and forests had been traced with the point of a hunting-knife. As the sap settled into these fine lines, they assumed a tint almost as dark as ink, so that every one was distinctly shown. The astonishing feature about the map was the artistic skill with which it was drawn. The lines displayed

a delicacy and accuracy that could not be improved. In some places there were creditable attempts at shading. It was the avowal of every engineer connected with Proctor's army that none of them could surpass the drawing, while some of the best declared they could not equal it; they certainly could not do so with the same material. This map was the work of Tecumseh, and, aside from the singular skill shown was the fact that it was correct to the minutest particular.

"I should be glad to make a stand here," remarked Proctor, after the discussion had lasted some time, "but I think we can secure a stronger position at Sandwich. It is not far to that point, and we can reach it soon enough in advance of the enemy to make our position so strong that he is certain of defeat."

Having invited the views of his brother-officers, Proctor found that they agreed with his own. Taking into consideration all the circumstances, it is probable that his decision to retreat was the right one.

The British commander would have felt more at ease could he have received the willing assent of Tecumseh to this movement. The chief was seated on the ground, his arms crossed, and silent. He listened to all that was said, for he spoke English as readily as those around him. When Proctor or any

of his officers were speaking, the black eyes of the chieftain remained steadily fixed upon his countenance until he was through, when he turned to the next who expressed his views, and that person received the same undivided attention.

Some of those who knew the temper of the remarkable man were uneasy. Tecumseh was fearless, and few of his hearers would have been surprised by a tempestuous outburst on his part that would sweep them off their feet. His attractive countenance was darkened by an expression of scorn, and it is possible that more than once he was on the eve of denouncing the cowardice of his associates, but, if such were the fact, he was able to master his emotions.

It was known to all that the discontent among the Indian allies had deepened from the time of the failure of the attack upon Fort Meigs. It has been shown that a large number withdrew and went to their homes. Others refused to cross into Canada, so that the force which remained with the British army was less than one half of that which had flocked to the banner of Tecumseh at the breaking out of the war.

None knew better than the Shawanoe that a retreat to Sandwich meant the defection of more of his warriors, though he was hopeful that if a fight was made at that point, he could hold them to their

work. The fact is not generally known that two directly opposite causes bound Tecumseh to Proctor to the last. His faith in the British leader at the beginning was unlimited. He was eager to help him strike a blow against the Americans because they had robbed his people of their lands, and was impatient for the opportunity to present itself.

It was hard for him to keep his warriors to their work, and when they began leaving after one or two defeats, he checked the panic by his persuasive powers, as well as by his threats. It was not long, however, before Tecumseh saw the wisdom of those who had deserted, and by and by he let it be known that he intended to follow their example.

It was then the unexpected truth appeared that a goodly number of Indian allies had resolved to stick by Proctor to the end. It would be hard to explain why they formed this resolution, but unquestionably it existed. Perhaps the British leader and his officers were able to deceive the red men by promises which they knew could never be fulfilled, or it may be that their faith in him had never been shaken. Be that as it may, Tecumseh, when his disgust prompted him to turn homeward, heard himself reproached by his own countrymen for his course.

"You led us into this war," they said, "and now when we are in it, you are going to abandon your children. We do not say you are afraid, for no one

has ever said that of the great war chief, but you do wrong to leave your children behind."

"I will take you with me," replied Tecumseh; "many of our warriors have fled, and why should we remain?"

"Tecumseh asks the question, but he brought us here."

"I thought, like you, that the Father who was to lead us in battle was a brave man, and would defeat the Americans, but he is a coward; he is afraid of the Americans; when they show themselves, he runs like a frightened fawn; the Americans are coming, and soon will be here; this is a good place to fight, but the Father says he can find a better place farther away; when he runs to that, he will say he knows of a better place, and he will fly to that; he is like a rabbit which sees the dog on his track."

"But after a time he will stop running from the Americans."

The response which Tecumseh made to this remark which was uttered by a chief much older than himself and for whom he felt a strong friendship was probably as near to humor as he ever went. Turning toward the chief, he said:

"Far to the eastward is a great sea; the pale faces came from the world on the other side of that sea; there is much snow and many frozen rivers to be crossed before the great sea is reached; our Father

and his men will retreat till they stand on the shore of that sea; then, when they see the Americans coming, they will all leap into the waters and drown themselves. *Then* we shall be done retreating."

It cannot be supposed that General Proctor and his officers would have been flattered had they heard this opinion of their generalship and bravery; but, after all, it was no rougher than many things they had listened to from Tecumseh. Great as was his power over his warriors, he did not shake their resolution to remain with Proctor until at least one more battle was fought. It is probable that Tecumseh did not try very persistently to persuade them to leave, for he must have felt that it was hardly honorable to do so. He spoke only for himself and a few of his close friends, among whom was his son, a stripling, who showed as much personal gallantry as himself, though far the inferior in ability.

The Indians now made an appeal which Tecumseh was never able to resist. They declared that having made up their minds to fight with the Father, they could not do so with hope of victory unless the war chief led them; they felt that, having brought them thus far, honor commanded him to remain and share their fate, at least to the extent of one more battle.

"I yield," said the stern chieftain, touched by this proof of devotion; "I shall stay with you and share your fate; I shall fight as hard as I know

how, but, with our Father at the head, we shall fail."

Proctor knew of this conference between Tecumseh and the Indian leaders, and anxiously awaited a report of the result, the Shawanoe having promised to come to him as soon as a decision was reached.

The British commander's uneasiness was not because he placed an unusually high estimation upon the aid of the red men. In truth, the American Indian is a poor soldier. He is not amenable to discipline, and does not fight well in the open; he needs the screen of trees and rocks, as at Braddock's massacre, or he must be certain that his numbers are overwhelming, or that he can surprise his enemy. At the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, during our civil war, Albert Pike's Indians scalped their friends with the same impartiality as their foes.

Proctor had already had enough experience with red men as allies as to form a poor estimate of their value, but he saw that a battle could not be deferred much longer. He had his own superior officers and his government to which he was responsible, and with a force fully the equal of the enemy, and with the advantages of position the same, he would find it hard to justify his continual falling back before the advance of the Americans, of whose military ability he had expressed more than one unfavorable opinion.

A comparison of the two opposing armies showed

them to be nearly equal in numbers, so that a few reinforcements to either side must be decisive. Hence the anxiety of the British leader to hold the Indians with him until after the battle. Comparatively inefficient as the red men might be, he looked upon them as holding the balance of power. Nothing was more certain than that General Harrison had made the most complete preparations possible for his invasion of Canada. Proctor did not know his precise strength, but his scouts and spies had given him tolerably accurate information, and he was afraid of the American leader.

But it was Tecumseh himself whom Proctor was most desirous of retaining. This chieftain has been often and truly referred to as the greatest American Indian that ever lived, and Proctor had received more valuable help from him personally than he was willing to admit, even to his friends.

The Shawanoe showed genuine generalship in battle; he was quick to take advantage of the mistakes of an enemy, and in arranging the British forces for a struggle, he had made suggestions to Proctor that were tested and proven to be the only ones that could bring success or avert disaster.

Had the British leader been compelled to choose between letting all of the Indian allies go and parting with their leader, he would have said: "Take every redskin in camp, provided you leave Tecumseh."

True to his promise, the chieftain went from his conference with his friends to Proctor, who met him alone. He looked keenly into the dusky face, striving to read the verdict there, but no man could do that when Tecumseh willed he should not.

"Tecumseh will stay with his warriors."

"And they will stay with me," exclaimed Proctor, with almost boyish delight.

"They believe you intend to fight; I don't," was the blunt explanation of the chieftain; "I have promised to wait until they see what fools they are."

No one of his own officers would have dared to address General Proctor in this manner, but he repressed his resentment.

"You do me a great injustice, Tecumseh; the Americans have more men than I, and they have better guns, and more big guns that kill so many people."

The Shawanoe looked contemptuously at the officer, as if this remark was not worth a reply. In truth, he gave it no heed.

"When will you fight?"

"Very soon; now, Tecumseh, you have proven yourself to be a great general, the equal of any that we have among us; you know that a wise leader always searches for the strongest position before giving battle to his enemy."

"And when he finds it, he fights, which you do not; it kills the hearts in the soldiers, when they hear themselves ordered all the time to run as soon as their enemies are seen. I have taught my warriors to run toward the enemy, but not from him."

"And you have taught them well; had our ships beaten the American ships on the lake, we should have been in Ohio——"

"I know that," impatiently interrupted the chieftain, who did understand the situation as clearly as his general; "it was right that we should not go there when we had no big canoes on the lake; but the Americans did not wait for you to come; if you had gone, they would have met you on the shores of the lake; instead of that, they have come here, and of what use is your army if it flees before them and leaves them to do as they please with your farms, your dwellings, and your people?"

"I have promised you that we shall fight the Americans," said Proctor, with more earnestness than he had yet shown; "and I shall keep that promise."

"I do not believe you."

"Wait and see."

"I shall wait—but only for a little while," was the significant response of Tecumseh as he walked away.

CHAPTER XX.

BETWEEN THE LINES.

"IT is n't safe for you to go any farther; it was n't exactly safe for you to come this far, but we 'll chance it; if you choose, you can wait here till I come back."

Thus spoke Simon Kenton to Ben Mayberry and George Hardin on a clear, sunshiny afternoon in October. The three had left the American lines, and had carefully made their way to a point midway between them and the ground held by General Proctor, whose army was separated from that of General Harrison by a space of between two and three miles.

When the enemy reached Sandwich, where it was the first intention of the British commander to make a stand against the Americans, he held a hurried consultation with his officers to consider the question of remaining and giving battle or of falling farther back to a place near the Moravian towns. At this council Tecumseh decided the matter by promptly declaring that the latter position was the better one. He had made a hurried visit to it with

three of his chiefs, who agreed with him that at the Moravian towns they could secure a much stronger position.

"I have picked the battle ground," he said significantly; "not a single warrior will retreat any farther; there the stand shall be made and the battle fought."

This decision was pleasing to Proctor, though he would have been better suited had the Shawanoe agreed that it was wiser to continue the retreat indefinitely, in the hope that General Harrison would become weary of pursuit and return to American soil. But the decision was quickly reached, and Tecumseh and his chiefs had no trouble in making everything satisfactory to their warriors, whose confidence in the great Shawanoe remained undiminished to the end.

The American scouts had now much less work than before this invasion of Canada. The pursuit was so vigorous that the opposing forces were almost constantly in sight of each other. As a rule, the scouts remained with the soldiers, though, when a halt was made, they pressed their dangerous work.

It was during a halt of the armies that Kenton, accompanied by the two young scouts, ventured forward to a point nearly midway between them. They were now, as will be noted, in the enemy's country—a section partially settled by Indians and

Canadians. Most of the people who found themselves in the path of the armies fled from their homes, terrified by the stories of the barbarities of the invaders. They drove off their live stock, thankful to escape from the ruthless foe with their lives. Tecumseh prevented his warriors from destroying any of the property, and the British army was equally considerate, inasmuch as they were in a friendly country.

But before the invasion was over, the settlers made the surprising discovery that the Americans did not make war like the British. They too respected the property of non-combatants. Guards were stationed at the houses along the line of march until all danger was past, and when the owners returned, expecting to find only the ashes of their homes, they were greeted by sight of the buildings that had not suffered the slightest injury.

Having passed beyond the American lines, Kenton and his two young friends halted at a house by the wayside that had been deserted by its occupants, who had not left so much as a domestic fowl behind. The building was a low, log structure, similar to many found on the border, consisting of two stories, and supplied with windows and all the conveniences needed by a small family of pioneers. It was apparent that the occupants were white persons, since the Indians favored more primitive structures,

mostly tepees or tents, though many used log buildings like the white people.

The house stood close to the highway, and the front door was open. Before entering, Kenton made a careful reconnoissance to satisfy himself that none of their enemies was within. Convinced that it was empty, he led the way, and the youths followed him through the open door.

A glance around told of the haste with which the family had fled. Embers were still glowing in the ashes on the hearth, the few dishes that had not been removed from the small table in the middle of the room and a number of garments hung on pegs in the wooden walls.

Like most of the settlers' homes, an inclined ladder at the rear led to the upper story. Of the three chairs on the lower floor, two were overturned, while the third stood upright in the middle of the room, as if mounting guard over the property. The people who had erected the building had little fear of any enemy at the time, and had therefore framed the windows on a broader pattern than those that were meant to serve as loopholes as well as to furnish light. Oiled paper took the place of panes, and an ordinary-sized man would have had no trouble in crawling out or into the building through the windows. As a consequence the house was not well calculated for defence, though the walls were

nearly cannon-proof, the clay between the chinks being hardened almost to the consistency of stone.

Having explored the interior, Kenton uttered the words with which this chapter opens, and lingered a few minutes before bidding his young friends good-by.

"Don't forget one thing," he said, impressively; "you must n't try to follow me."

"We had no thought of doing that," replied George Hardin.

"I 'm on my way to meet Tecumseh," he added; "we 're to have a talk, and he expects me."

The youths had never referred to that interview which they witnessed some weeks before between Forts Meigs and Stephenson. They were astonished when the famous scout said:

"You have n't forgot that talk him and me had, when you was hid in the woods alongside the trail down in Ohio."

"Who told you of that?" asked Hardin.

The scout threw back his head and laughed in his silent fashion.

"Do you younkers think that Simon Kenton is the one to walk right past two chaps without knowing it? He mought have done it a good many years ago when he did n't know any more than you, but not since he was high enough to look over the top of a fence."

"Yes, we saw you," said Ben, also smiling; "but had no idea you were within miles of us till you went past. We had no wish to play the spy on you and Tecumseh."

"You did n't tell him anything about our being there?" asked Hardin.

"No, but he spoke to me 'bout it while I was shaking hands with him; he seen you as soon as you seen him."

This was astonishing information, and the wondering boys looked in each others' faces and then at the grinning scout.

"We never dreamed of such a thing," said Hardin; "why did he leave us alone?"

"Why should n't he? He told me he was fighting men, not boys, and he did n't think you younkers was of 'nough 'count to bother his head over, but he obsarved I had better look after you, or you mought get into trouble."

This was not flattering to the self-esteem of the youths, but since Kenton himself had brought up the matter, Ben Mayberry pushed his inquiry.

"We wondered why you should meet Tecumseh."

"And I 'spose you wonder why I 'm going to meet him agin?"

"We do."

"Wal, I may give you the partic'lars when I git through with this, but it ain't worth while now."

"I remember, Kenton, that when General Smith wanted you to go to Fort Stephenson to warn Major Croghan of the attack that was about to be made on him, you excused yourself on the plea of another important engagement."

"That is correct; I had made the engagement with Tecumseh two weeks afore."

"But you met him between Fort Meigs and Fort Stephenson, so that you could have gone on and reached Major Croghan sooner than we, after you had kept your engagement with Tecumseh; why did n't you do it?"

"'Cause there war n't any airthly use of it; Major Croghan did n't need any warning; he kept as keen a look-out as Gin'ral Smith, and could have sent *him* news with just as much reason; I 'll warrant the Major was mad when he found what you came for."

"So he was," replied Hardin, with a vivid remembrance of the words of the young officer upon receiving their message.

"The Gin'ral meant all right, but he should n't have done it; that 's why I turned about after I was through with Tecumseh, so as to give my report to Gin'ral Harrison as soon as he got back from Kaintuck."

"Did General Harrison know of your meeting with Tecumseh?"

"I reckon; me and him talked the thing over,

and he knows every word that passed atween the chief and me; he knows all 'bout this trip too."

"Well," said Ben, seeing that the scout was not disposed to tell more; "we shall be interested in the particulars when you are ready to tell us, but, if we are in danger in coming this far, you must be in greater danger when you pass into the lines of General Proctor."

Without replying, Kenton drew from his pocket an oblong piece of leather. It was two or three inches in length, with a perfectly round hole through the middle, and with one end curiously fringed, the work being done with an artistic taste that excited the admiration of the youths, who took it in their hands and curiously inspected it.

"What is it?" asked Hardin, as he handed it back to Kenton.

"A pass from Tecumseh; I reckon no Injin or Redcoat would dare to refuse that if I showed it to him."

"How long have you carried it?"

The veteran scout smiled over the recollection of some incident that gave him pleasure.

"It was just afore the battle of Tippecanoe, when Tecumseh was on his way to stir up the other tribes that he got into trouble; it ain't worth while for me to explain, for some of our people would n't be pleased at what I done; Gin'ral Harrison told me it

was a mistake on my part, 'cause if it had n't been that way, Tecumseh would have been killed, and most of this trouble would have been saved. Howsumever, it was done, and I can't say that I was ever sorry. Tecumseh give me this pass after that, and it has sarved me powerful well more 'n once. I never use it onless I have to, fur I prefer having a scrimmage with the varmints when I have a show to pull out."

Kenton replaced the article in his pocket, and with a few parting words, passed through the door and disappeared from sight.

The house in which Hardin and Mayberry had taken up their quarters for a brief while stood in a depression of land, with cultivated ground on all sides, and the highway winding in front. Kenton had walked along this highway to the slight elevation to the left over which he passed from view. The peculiar position of the cabin between the lines made it dangerous for the members of either army, because of which fact, when the youths peeped out from the front and rear, and because too of their brief view, they failed to see a living person or animal. Yet to the right lay General Harrison's army, while at about the same distance to the left was that of General Proctor. They were resting for a short time, though it was likely that both would be on the move in the course of a few hours.

With the retreat of the British force and the advance of the American the peril of the young scouts must diminish and finally disappear, but during the intervening interval, who should say what might happen ?

If the youths were expecting trouble, they were not disappointed. They had explored the lower story, and, finding nothing of interest, climbed the ladder in the corner to the upper floor, first taking the precaution to fasten the door by means of the heavy wooden bar stretched across the middle; but, inasmuch as four broad windows remained unguarded, this precaution looked superfluous.

There was nothing above that interested them. The two large rooms had been used for sleeping apartments, and it was another proof of the haste with which the occupants fled that the bedding and garments were left behind. The furniture was scant, but an air of neatness was observable everywhere.

" We may as well go below," said Hardin, moving across to where the upper part of the ladder projected above the level of the floor; " there is nothing here worth looking at. I wonder whether we shall have any visitors—— "

He was in the act of placing his foot on one of the rounds, when he drew it back with a startled glance into the face of his companion. Both had

heard a slight noise below which showed that some person was there, and as they listened they detected faint, guarded footsteps.

The youths had their rifles with them, but did not speak, and stood as motionless as statues while they listened.

The thought of both was that the owner of the house had stealthily returned. If such was the fact, nothing was to be feared, since it would be easy to make a satisfactory explanation to him, but it would have been imprudent to act upon the supposition until more definite knowledge was secured.

For several minutes the faint footfalls were audible. The visitor was evidently moving about the room. He must have known of the presence of strangers over his head, for Ben and George had talked freely and were moving around when they learned that some one had entered the room below.

Suddenly the noise ceased. The man was standing still or had gone. Hardin stepped softly to one of the front windows and peeped out, but could see no one. Ben kept his place by the ladder, believing that the stranger would come up or appear at the foot, but he did neither.

"Helloa, down there!" called Ben, in a guarded voice, which, however, could have been heard all through the house; "we are friends; who are you?"

There was no response, and, after waiting a few

minutes, the young Kentuckian stooped down and thrust his head far enough into the opening to see the whole interior. No one was in sight.

"He has left," said Ben, stepping upon the rungs and hastily descending, closely followed by his companion.

That which they saw told the story. One of the raised windows showed that the visitor had entered through that, while the open door revealed his means of exit, though there was little to choose between the two.

"He can't be far off," said Hardin, who passed hurriedly through the door to make an observation of their surroundings, satisfied that he had looked through the wrong upper window a short time before.

The first glance in the direction of the elevation over which Simon Kenton had disappeared told more than he wished to know. Standing out in full view were two Indians, one of whom instantly raised his rifle and fired full at the youth, who never dodged more quickly into a house than he did upon receiving the startling salute.

He heard the zip of the bullet as it whizzed past his head and buried itself in the solid door, the miss being as narrow as can be imagined.

The heavy bar was quickly replaced, and then the two felt safe against any rush by their enemies.

"I think that shot is entitled to a return," exclaimed the angered Hardin, as he stooped to the side of the open window with the intention of firing through it. The spot where he had seen the red warriors was in exact range, and he was hopeful of making a more successful shot than that of his enemy.

But lo! neither of them was in sight. After their demonstration, they had made a lightning-like shift of position which took them wholly out of the field of vision, and whither they had vanished was the interesting question.

George ran across the lower floor and peeped out of one of the rear windows, but without detecting them. Had the Indians chosen to run toward either end of the house they would have been invisible, since there were no windows there. But the youths believed they had gone over the top of the hill, where the earth interposed to shut them from sight, and the succeeding few minutes showed this supposition to be right.

"There they are!" whispered Ben, from the side of the front window; "they are peeping over the ridge of ground."

He had caught sight of a stained eagle's feather, some black hair, a low forehead, and two eyes glowing like baleful orbs over the horizon. Several feet to the left, a similar apparition was observable.

Evidently the Indians were on the watch for another chance at the young men in the cabin.

"I think I can fetch that one on the right," whispered the yóung Kentuckian, silently sinking upon one knee, so as to rest the muzzle of his heavy weapon on the sill.

"And I 'll try the one on the left," said Hardin, taking a similar posture at the other window; "we must make sure, for they won't give us another chance if we miss—confound it!"

The eye of the young scout was running along the gun-barrel, when the upper part of the head to which he was giving attention dropped from sight. It was a bitter disappointment, but there was no help for it.

"Shall I wait a minute or two for him to show himself again?" asked Ben, who had drawn a bead on his man.

"No, or you will lose your chance."

The young Kentuckian had taken dead aim, and pausing only long enough to make sure that the sight had not varied in the slight interval, he pulled the trigger. The bullet sped unerringly, and when the warrior disappeared from sight, it was for all time.

"I hope he is the one who shot at me," was the comment of Hardin, who retained his place by the window, while Ben, following the rule that he had

learned in his earliest boyhood, rose to his feet and began reloading his rifle, without pausing to assure himself of the result of this shot. Indeed, he had received the assurance in the rasping screech of the Indian as he vanished.

The puzzle was as to what had become of his companion, and in what manner he was busying himself. Hardin's eyes roamed along the crest of the slight elevation without catching a glimpse of him, and the survey from one of the rear windows failed to reveal the miscreant, who, it was not to be supposed had taken his departure, or, if he had done so, was sure of a speedy return with reinforcements.

The boys were still looking cautiously forth and listening, when a peculiar whoop, quickly repeated several times from beyond the crest of the hill was heard.

"It 's a signal to his friends," was the comment of Ben Mayberry; "we shall soon have them all around us."

"I hope some of *our* friends will hear the firing, and try to find out what it means."

"What about Kenton?"

"There 's no saying how far off he is; if he hears the reports of the guns, he may not suspect their meaning; but I think that if we can hold out for an hour or two, there will be a chance for us."

CHAPTER XXI.

"GOOD-BYE!"

SIMON KENTON had not far to go before receiving proof that he was in the enemy's country. He had passed a stretch of timber, still keeping to the highway, when he was challenged by a picket, who looked at him curiously, as if he suspected his identity, and wondered at his presuming to venture thus far without the protection of a flag of truce.

The scout produced the leathern pass described, and handed it to the soldier, who surveyed it critically; but he must have received instructions concerning it, for with a smile he handed it back to the American.

"I 'll be hanged!" was his exclamation; "go on."

A short distance beyond the wood the thing was repeated. Then Kenton turned from the road, entered a grove of timber, into which he penetrated until he reached a small open space, where, as before, the Shawanoe leader was awaiting him. Tecumseh was seated on a fallen tree, but rose

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when he heard the approaching footsteps, and shook hands with his old friend.

The faces of both were grave, for each felt the solemnity of the occasion. There was no attempt at pleasantry by Kenton when both sat down, while the Shawanoe was in an unusually serious mood even for him.

"Did you expect me?" asked the scout.

"My brother speaks with a single tongue; he sent me word that he would meet me in this hollow by the fallen tree."

"Yes, I gin'rally keep my promises, but ain't always able to; wal, Tecumseh, it has turned out just as I told you."

The chief nodded his head without speaking. He understood the reference.

"Proctor has done nothing but retreat since Gin'ral Harrison had a chance to git at him; he has been druv out of our country, and we have come into his, and he is still running before us."

"General Proctor is a squaw—he is a child—he is not a soldier!" said Tecumseh, with bitterness; "he is not fit to command men!"

"You found that out before you went with him into Canada."

"But he will soon fight," said the chieftain, speaking as freely to his visitor as if he were one of the British officers.

"That 's what we have been trying to make him do, but he is sure to be whipped out of his boots; what, then, will become of Tecumseh?"

"He will be dead," was the startling reply; "I shall fall in the next battle, and I am glad, for I have no wish to live."

Kenton never felt deeper sympathy for a man than he did for the remarkable Indian sitting beside him.

"Do you not see, Tecumseh, the mistake you have made? When I talked with you some weeks ago I spoke for Gin'ral Harrison, and I speak for him now; he asks me to urge you, as I urged you then, to withdraw all your warriors from Proctor, and return to your homes in the Territory."

"General Harrison is a brave soldier, and speaks with a single tongue; will he give us back the lands the white men stole from us?" asked the chief, turning with an eager expression upon his visitor.

"Tecumseh, there ain't any white people that have got more brains than you, and powerful few that have got as much; the Gin'ral can't do as you want him to do; the white people, when compared with yours, are like the leaves on the trees; they won't let him give back your lands, and you know it; you do not act like a wise man when you talk tother way; what 's the difference? There 's a hundred times more land than you need for your

hunting-grounds in the Northwest Territory; there 's plenty of game and fish there, and you can enjoy yourselves as much in one place as in tother."

"But the white men will increase and drive us from that land."

"You 'll have still more hunting-grounds behind you."

"But beyond that rolls the great sea, and the red men by and by will find themselves on the shores of that sea; what, then, will become of them?"

"Now, see here, my old friend," plead Kenton, laying his hand on the knee of the chieftain, who did not repel the familiarity, which he would have permitted from no one else; "what 's the use of figgering ahead three or four thousand years? It 'll take that long for your people to be druv to the Pacific, and there 's no use of your trying to fight the battles of them that won't be here till you and me have been in our graves and forgot for longer than any one can remember."

"But all red men are brothers, and we must fight for those that are to come after us; the Great Spirit wishes us to do that."

"That may be, but what 's the use of fighting a fight that there ain't no use in fighting?" was the forceful question of the scout, who was never more persuasive. "The Americans are living upon the lands that once was yours, and there ain't any way

of driving 'em off; there 's plenty left for you folks —so why not take it, and cry quits?"

This may have sounded logical, but it did not convince Tecumseh. In truth, General Harrison, although hopeful that the former visit of Kenton would result in drawing the Shawanoe leader away from Proctor (for he knew of the disaffection among his warriors), believed that the present visit was useless. But Kenton was sanguine.

Suddenly the chief said:

"There will be a great battle before the sun goes down more than once."

"Do you believe Proctor will stand his ground?"

"He *must!*" said Tecumseh; "if he does n't, every Indian warrior will leave him; if he does not stop and fight at the Moravian towns, I will drive my tomahawk into his brain!"

Kenton was startled by this fierce threat, but a glance at the dusky countenance beside him left no doubt of the chieftain's terrible earnestness.

"What do you think, Shawanoe, will be the result of the fight?"

"Proctor will be beaten."

"And if he is beat, will you and your warriors leave him?" eagerly asked Kenton.

"My warriors who survive will leave him, but what difference does it make as to *me?*"

"You are more important than all your warriors,

or all the Wyandots, and Pottawatomies, and Delawares, and the whole lot of 'em."

"This will be the last fight of Tecumseh; when the battle is ended and Proctor is again running before the Americans, Tecumseh will be no more."

These words were uttered with an impressiveness that chilled the heart of Kenton, who could not shake off the oppressiveness they produced.

"Wal, I 've been in a good many scrimmages in my time, and I mind me that more than once I was sure I was going to slide under, but I am still above ground; I know you will go into the battle, and you 'll fight like a thousand furies, but I don't know, and you don't know, whether you 'll be hurt or whether you 'll come out without a scratch."

"The Great Spirit has spoken to Tecumseh; his work is done; he has failed; the white men must increase; the red men must be their slaves, and Tecumseh is glad that he shall not live till his eyes see that woeful time."

"If you want to serve your people best, draw off with your warriors and go to your new homes; then you will live many years and be happy."

To his dying day Simon Kenton remembered the face of Tecumseh when he turned and looked at him. He did not speak for a full minute, but his black eyes gazed directly into those that met them unflinchingly. The Shawanoe chieftain was un-

deniably handsome, with regular features, and his habitual grave expression became him well. He seemed to be looking through his friend, who was almost frightened by his manner. But still gazing into his eyes, the chieftain said in his low, musical voice:

"Tecumseh has chosen the battle-ground for General Proctor; he has promised that he and his warriors will fight with him once more."

"That ends it," replied the bitterly disappointed scout, who knew that neither death nor torture could induce Tecumseh to break his word. The scout remained seated, silent, and with his face partially averted. The chieftain understood his feelings, and, to the astonishment of Kenton, he added:

"I would do much for General Harrison, for he is a brave soldier and a true man; but I would give my life for you."

"What do you mean?"

"You saved me before the battle of Tippecanoe; had you come to me sooner, before my promise to Proctor, I would have done as you wish; I would have left him with my warriors and gone to our new homes and lived in peace with the Americans."

"Ah, if I had only seen you a few days sooner!" exclaimed Kenton, crushed by the knowledge of the opportunity gone forever.

Tecumseh turned toward him again with his sad, penetrating look. No one understood the simple-hearted scout better than he.

"What is the war chief of the Shawanoes?" he asked, in the low voice which never failed to thrill his listeners no less than the thunderous tones that had roused his savage race to brave death itself; "he is one grain among the sands on the shore; an oak standing amid a forest of oaks; one leaf of the thousands that hang on the trees; all must flutter to the ground before the blasts of winter; some will fall before others, and what matter it if I am clasped to the bosom of my mother earth before this moon is old? The Great Spirit does as he thinks wise, and his plans heed not the whims of his children, whether their faces are pale or red, or whether they are warriors or chiefs."

"Those are beautiful words, Shawanoe," replied Kenton; "your people have a way of using what some folks call figgers of speech, which makes it hard sometimes to git at the meaning of your words; but I take it that you are saying that you and me ain't of any 'count anyway in this world, which will go on just the same after we 're gone as it did when we was here and kicking up such a big fuss; is that your idea?"

The Shawanoe nodded.

"I once heard one of your missionaries say that

we are held in the hollow of his hand; we are but a breath which is gone while you look at it; you bow down to a being whom you call God; the red man thinks of him as the Great Spirit, but to me the two are the same. If we follow the light that he has given us, and try to please him in what we do and say and think, He will not cast us off, but will meet us in the happy hunting-grounds, and make it well with us."

"No one has ever come back from that land of shadows to tell us about such things, Shawanoe, but when I hear an Injin talk like that, I 've the idee that he knows as much about what waits us on tother side of the grave as any white missionary; and all that any one knows is that we 've got to walk a straight line, speak with a single tongue, treat every man as if he was a brother, and it 'll be right when we slide out of this life into the other. No; it can't make any difference to the Great Spirit whether you fall in the coming battle or live fifty years longer, but it makes a confounded difference to Gin'ral Harrison and the rest of us."

The chieftain did not show the shadow of a smile at the simple earnestness of his companion. He sat silent for a few moments, looking at the blue autumn sky, as if his thoughts were of a nature that it would be wrong to try to describe.

"Many moons ago a pale face came across the

great sea; he brought his children with him; they were good men; they thought those whom the Great Spirit made with skins of red or black were their brothers; they bought the lands of the Indians, and spoke words of peace and good-will; they took no oath when they signed their treaty, but they never broke it; they never harmed the red man, and the red man never harmed them."

"I 've heard of Penn and his Quakers; yes, Shawanoe, they were good men, and woe it is that there are so few like 'em. If all our people were as the Quakers, there never would be any wars with the Injins nor among the white folks themselves."

Tecumseh rose to his feet, and turning toward Kenton held out his hand.

"My brother, who has made the wars between my people and yours?"

"I can speak only the truth to you; it is my own people."

"Do you blame Tecumseh because he has dug up the hatchet?"

"No, nor never shall; but I hope you will bury it, and do what you can to bring about that peace you speak of."

The chieftain shook his head.

"I have done all I can; I can do no more; the battle must be fought, but your people will win; if you and I meet in battle, our hands will fall by our

sides, yet you will strike hard blows at my people, and I shall strike hard ones at yours. But we are brothers, and shall be when the Great Spirit calls us home to him. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Tecumseh," replied the scout, wringing his hand and vainly striving to keep back his tears.

Then they parted and never met again.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TALISMAN.

THE young scouts in the cabin were right in their supposition that the cry of the Indian beyond the crest of the hill was a summons to his friends in the neighborhood, and the response was more prompt than the youths expected. Only a few minutes had passed when they caught glimpses of a number of warriors peeping over the elevation. They showed themselves for an instant, when their heads disappeared, to reappear a second later at some other point. The shot of the young Kentuckian had taught them a lesson, and those people do not take unnecessary chances.

Three of the red men took a shot at the building, or rather at the defenders, firing at the windows, in the hope that their bullets would find one of the youths, who were equally careful about exposing themselves to danger. Each of the bullets entered the room, but did not pass near enough to Ben or George to cause uneasiness. So long as the contest continued in that fashion, they had nothing to fear.

But the assailants were not the ones to overlook

the advantage that was at their command from the first. By shifting their position to the right or left, they were opposite an end of the building from which the two could not fire, since there were no windows at command. While several held their places by lying on the ground, the majority put themselves beyond the reach of harm in the manner mentioned. Soon after, the rumble of voices showed that they had reached the cabin.

"There is only one thing they can do," said Hardin, when this fact was apparent; "if they use fire, we shall be caught as poor Jim Perkins was."

"It will take some time," replied Ben, as much disturbed as his comrade, "and some of our friends ought to arrive."

"They may not come for hours; Kenton will return before that."

"If he does, it will be only to put himself in as bad a situation as we."

"His pass from Tecumseh will save him."

"I am afraid not, but if it does, it will not help us."

The two were talking in low tones, listening and on the alert, when, to their amazement, some one struck the door a resounding knock. Ben stepped forward and demanded:

"Who is there?'

" Wallah," was the reply.

" The scamp!" exclaimed Hardin; " are we never to be rid of him?"

" What do you want?" asked Ben, with his head close to the entrance.

" Broder come out—we make prisoner—we take to Tecumseh—he no hurt broder."

Hardin had peeped from the window and saw that the one-eyed half-breed had a companion, a warrior, who seemed to be a Wyandot, and who was a stranger. The true policy of the youths was to gain all the time possible in the hope that a party of their friends would come to their rescue.

" If we surrender, will you take us to Tecumseh or General Proctor?"

It was not curious perhaps that the half-breed knew the imperilled youths would prefer to be placed in the power of the Shawanoe chieftain, since he had already protected them from outrage, when the British general refused to do so.

" Take you to Tecumseh—he no hurt—he friend of broder," was the prompt reply of Wallah, the One-Eyed.

" We are hungry; wait till we have finished our meal."

The pretext was so ridiculous that, despite the gravity of the situation, Hardin smiled, and Ben himself was amused by his own words.

"Open door—we eat wid broder—den all go to Tecumseh."

The young Kentuckian saw it was useless to dally with their enemies.

"Wallah, we shall not surrender; if you want us, you must take us."

"We burn cabin—den shoot broder when come out."

"That will be better for us than to surrender."

Instead of talking further, Wallah and his companion passed around the end of the house where they were beyond harm.

Ben turned to his comrade:

"They won't have any trouble in firing the cabin; they can get all the kindling wood they need from the fence, outbuildings, and that pile off there to the left."

"It looks, Ben, as if we are in a bad fix."

"There is n't any doubt of it; let 's keep watch, and shoot when we see a chance; if none of our friends come, we shall have to make a break for it, or surrender and take our chances with Wallah."

"We shall have no chance at all; he 'll kill us the minute he can do so."

They listened closely, but could not make out what their enemies were doing. Now and then the youths heard their footsteps as they moved about, and occasionally one of them spoke, but there was

no smell or sign of smoke, though the defenders were confident that the Indians would appeal to that last argument in the case.

While Simon Kenton was holding his remarkable interview with Tecumseh, he noted the reports of rifles from the direction of the cabin where he had left his friends. He suspected their meaning, but, confident that they could defend themselves for some time, he did not hasten the close of his interview, which was made by the Shawanoe himself. When, however, he emerged from the wood into the highway, he broke into a lope, for he began to feel, after all, that his presence was probably needed. The sentinels recognized him, and he was allowed to pass without questioning or halt.

Occasionally there were reports of guns from other points. Indeed, it was inevitable, with the two armies lying so near each other, and with scouting parties skurrying back and forth. The distance was not far, and, when the famous scout came in sight of the hill and immediately after of the cabin, he was quick to see how matters stood.

There were eight Wyandots, under the leadership of Wallah the One-Eyed, gathered at the end of the building. A pile of dry wood had already been heaped against the logs, which, when fired, would quickly wrap the building in a consuming blaze. Then woeful must be the fate of the two youths,

who were deprived of the opportunity of firing so much as a single shot in their defence.

Kenton did not hesitate. As soon as he saw the group, he shouted and strode rapidly toward them. They had caught sight of him, and Wallah was angry and surprised by his appearance. He turned and scowled, while Kenton came down the slope and paused almost among the group.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, his usually mild countenance aflame with anger.

"What be it to you?" asked Wallah in English, though Kenton understood the Wyandot tongue.

"It is my bus'ness; the young men in there are friends of mine."

This may have been convincing logic to the speaker, but it was not to the listeners. The work of setting fire to the combustible stuff was suspended, and the eight Wyandots gave their attention to their leader and the white man, not doubting that the proceedings would be summary.

Wallah, the half-breed, grinned significantly.

"They be your friends; they be our prisoners; then you be our prisoner; we take you and them to Gen'l Proctor."

He said something in a low tone to the warriors standing around, and they laid their hands on their knives or tomahawks. Each was provided with a rifle, and all were in their war-paint.

By way of reply, Kenton produced the leathern pass of Tecumseh, and, without handing it to Wallah, held it up so that it was in plain sight of all.

"Do you know what that is?"

Every one understood its significance at a glance. Wallah reached his hand to take it, but Kenton refused.

"I prefer to keep it; I have just come from Tecumseh; he knows that I have it; it has carried me past all the sentinels; not even Proctor himself would dare lay a hand on me so long as I have that; what have you to say?" triumphantly demanded the scout, still holding the talisman in sight, but beyond reach of any of them.

Wallah would have been happy to disregard the pass, but he dared not. He was cowed by the manner of Kenton.

"It is Tecumseh's order that my broder be no hurt—we not hurt him—he go 'way—we take broders in cabin—no want great scout."

Kenton expected this, and was ready.

"Wallah, do you obsarve *that?*" he asked, again holding up the talisman to view, and indicating the curiously fringed end; "the hole in the middle is a pass for *me;* the fringe at the end means '*my friends*'; you must let them go with me; you dare not say no."

This was bluff. The fringe had no such meaning

as the scout pretended; the pass was for him individually; he was the only white man ever thus favored by the great Shawanoe leader.

The One-Eyed must have known the truth, for he shook his head.

"Great scout lie—not so—we take broders in cabin—great scout go."

"Do you dare refuse that?" thundered Kenton, stepping forward and shaking the bit of leather almost against the nose of the half-breed.

"Me do dat," replied the unabashed Wallah, his eyes flashing with anger.

"Then, by the Eternal! you infernal traitor! you and me will fight it out!"

Kenton was in a towering rage. He was not bluffing now, but laying his hand on the knife suspended in front of his breast, thus notified the half-breed that they would decided the matter with their weapons. It was a daring thing to do, for the question might well be asked what the action of the Wyandots, who were standing round, would be. Would they accept the verdict of the hand-to-hand fight which was certain to go in favor of the white man, who was vastly the superior of the miscreant in strength, activity, and skill?

Nevertheless, the desperate conflict would have been on within the next minute but for an interruption as unexpected by one party as the other.

Kenton had drawn his knife and confronted Wallah, who, seeing himself literally forced into a fight which he feared, prepared himself for the onset, when one of the Wyandots uttered an exclamation and dashed up the slope like a deer, with his companions streaming after him as if all were running for their lives.

In truth, that was what they were doing, for over the brow of the opposite hill, from the direction of the American army, galloped a squad of Kentucky cavalry out on a scouting expedition. Catching sight of the Indians, they shouted and came down the slope like the wind.

The half-breed was quick to see his peril, and, wheeling about, sped up the slope only a few paces behind his panic-smitten companions.

"I think I 'll take a shy at you for luck; you 've been playing double with us, and it 's my Christian duty."

But before the scout could bring his rifle to his shoulder, he was anticipated by the horsemen, who began firing their carbines the moment they saw the fleeing redskins.

Three of them sprawled on their faces as they were passing over the top of the hill, the first being Wallah, the One-Eyed, whose death was more sudden than he deserved. Without giving attention to Kenton, whom the horsemen recognized, the shout-

ing cavalrymen galloped after the remaining fugitives, determined to do all the execution possible, and we must say they were eminently successful.

Thus, in a twinkling, Simon Kenton, Ben Mayberry, and George Hardin found themselves together, and without another person in sight.

"Come, younkers," said the scout, in his cheery manner; "it looks as if a battle is to be fout mighty sudden, and we 'll be needed."

General Proctor kept the pledge he made to Tecumseh. Having retreated to the Moravian towns on the Thames, he determined to make a stand against the American army under General Harrison. It was Tecumseh, who, in conjunction with him, selected the battle-ground and assisted in forming the plan of battle. Tecumseh himself commanded the left wing of the British army, and his warriors showed remarkable steadiness.

It was on the fifth of October, 1813, that Generals Harrison and Shelby, the latter the hero of King's Mountain, and then Governor of Kentucky, made an impetuous attack upon Proctor, whose regulars fought well, but were unable to withstand the dashing charges of the American soldiers, who utterly routed them and captured many prisoners. Proctor was anxiously watching the contest, and when he saw defeat impending, he dashed off on his horse

and made good his escape, not dying until forty-six years afterward.

The battle was hardly under way when Tecumseh, while leading a charge, was shot dead. Who fired the fatal shot will never be known, but it was probably Colonel Richard M. Johnson, afterward Vice-President of the United States.

"My horse had just been killed," said Colonel Johnson, "and I was extricating my feet from the stirrups, when an Indian, whose dress and appearance showed him to be a chief, bore down upon me like a whirlwind. He had a sword in one hand, and I saw he was giving his whole attention to me; I did n't wait to ask him his name, but let fly with my pistol. He was so close that I could not miss, and he fell at my feet."

As soon as it was known that Tecumseh had fallen, the Indians were seized with panic, and their headlong flight from the field did much to add to the confusion and defeat of the army itself.

The victory of the Thames was overwhelming and decisive. Ohio was no longer in danger, the Indian confederacy was destroyed, and all that General Hull had betrayed was recovered.

Simon Kenton, Ben Mayberry, and George Hardin fought bravely through the battle. The only one of the three injured was Ben Mayberry, whose wound, however, was so slight that it did not in-

capacitate him for immediate duty. The two young scouts and comrades did excellent service to the close of the war, when they returned to their homes. Both lived to a good old age, and their descendants are among the most honored of the citizens of Kentucky and Ohio.

THE END.

THE CAVALRY COMING. *Page 309.*